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The Magazine of INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT™
Number 97
47209
August 1992
Walt Disney Software's Stunt Island
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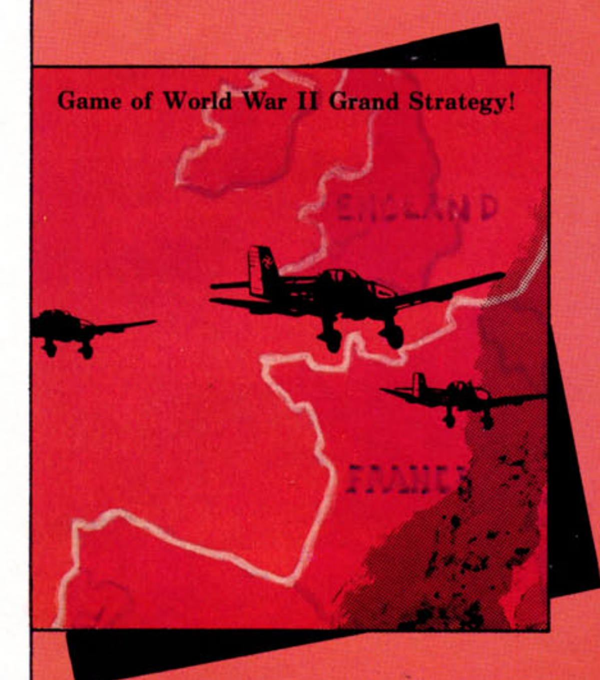
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Psalms 9:1-2

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**VGA screen shots*
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Taking A Peek

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58 BEST EGA/VGA SHAREWARE GAMES: Get the spade out of the shed and shovel these "best of" shareware games onto your HD. Arcade games, gambling games, board games, sports games, games, games, games! The package even includes *Bass Duel 1.1*, that 2-player head-to-head fishing simulation classic. Play along while watching the Fishing Channel on cable. Also includes **Apogee Software**'s *Commander Keen #1 & #2*, but *does not* include their soon-to-be-classic 3-D adaptation of *Castle Wolfenstein*. IBM ($49.00). Circle Reader Service #1.

Bungie Software Products
5455 South Hyde Park Blvd.
Garden Level
Chicago, IL 60615-5805
(312) 493-2849

MINOTAUR — THE LABYRINTHS OF CRETE: For up to seven players over an AppleTalk network, *Minotaur* comes from the *Mad Maze, Net Trek* and *RoboSport* school of Macintosh netware. Up to seven players maneuver concurrently in a randomly created maze in an attempt to find and use better items, defeat the occasional wondering monster and slay the other players in the game. Characters are individually created with three adjustable attributes, assigned a "class" and turned loose. With over 50 different spells and items, the player aid cards provided become highly useful. Using a keyboard interface, there is no "AI" in the game, but each package contains two master disks for instant hook-up to a friend's Mac. Macintosh ($89.99). Circle Reader Service #2.

Capstone
Miami, FL

GRANDMASTER CHESS: Daring users to compare this product to *Chessmaster 3000* and *Sargon V*, **Capstone** *has served up* this, another high-end, super "brainiac" chess program designed to challenge the masters and tutor beginners. Complete with a mind-boggling array of options and both 2-D and 3-D layouts (in SVGA only), graphics have also been provided for different looking sets of pieces. Players' won / loss records will be maintained and will be rated with a U.S. Chess Federation ranking. Supports major sound cards and, interestingly, the Disneys Sound Source. A worthy addition to the line of top-flight chess programs. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

TRUMP CASTLE II: A comprehensive casino collection now made even more complete, *Trump Castle II* features lavish digitized animations intended to hold together the various gambling games as players move from section to section of the casino. Along with the multiple variations of Baccarat, Blackjack, Craps, Roulette, Video Poker and Slots included in the original *Trump Castle*, this deluxe edition adds Lots-O-Slots with nine more slot machine types and Poker (ironically, a game which is illegal in New Jersey) in its five and seven-card stud, five-card draw and Texas Hold 'Em varieties with four computer opponents to play against. IBM ($79.95). Circle Reader Service #4.


58 Best EGA/VGA Shareware Games

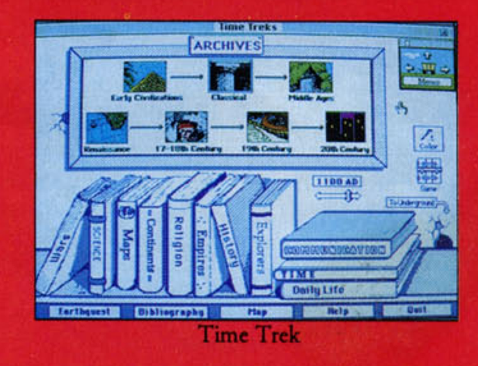


Minotaur - The Labyrinths of Concrete


Gramdmaster Chess



Trump Castle



Time Trek

EarthQuest Inc.
25 University Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301
(415)321-5838

TIME TREK: Disguised as yet another edutainment title and following in the wake of Carmen Sandiego's success is a very well-researched collection of historical hypercard stacks. While the collection of games intended to "get people into history" seem a bit contrived and are occasionally confusing, the organization and presentation of historical facts in its database is top notch. Included is a timetable modelled after *The Timetables of History* as well as subject stacks on topics like the Explorers, Science, Daily Life, Religion, Wars, Empires — all illustrated with scanned images and maps. Though the graphic presentation lags behind its many competitors, this product has far more depth that most. Ages 9 to Adult. Mac Consumer Version ($59.95) Educator Version ($89.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Free Spirit Software
720 Sycamore St.
Columbus, IN 47201
(812) 376-9964

BRAVO ROMEO DELTA: With movies like "Fail Safe" and "Dr. Strangelove" *(or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb)* as the classic cinematic retellings of "toe-to-toe nuclear combat with the Ruskies," it was only a matter of time before a game like *Bravo Romeo Delta* came along to do a serious treatment of the unthinkable. This time, as commander of NORAD forces, the player must skillfully execute PD-59 (a Presidential Directive calling for a limited nuclear response so as not to escalate the war). Winning the war in such a way that post-war popular opinion remains favorable is hard to remember when launching ICBMs and tracking their journey into the former Soviet Union. Played in "real time," one can command either side. Amiga ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Hollyware Entertainment
13464 Washington Blvd.
Marina Del Rey, CA 90291
(310) 822-9200

HOI: When Hoi discovers that the disturbing rumblings from his innermost being aren't lunch, but rather his manhood coming into full flower, he sets off across the Madlands in search of a mate lying in wait in the Great Beyond. Poor Hoi finds the Madlands to be a nasty place in which practically everything can kill him. The player's task is to maneuver this defenseless creature over impaling spikes,

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Circle Reader Service #101

Taking A Peek

around buzzing bees, past hissing bombs, over cute magic mushrooms....it is *so-o-o* cute one could just sit and smile enchantedly as Hoi dies over and over again (Hoi's primary activity) . This one is probably more suited to Cartridge Land than anywhere else. Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

Infogrames
84, rue du 1er Mars 1943
69628 Villeurbanne Cedex, France

ETERNAM: This game does nothing to refute the stereotypes about the French and their inscrutable sense of humor. This one is just plain *weird* in both story and design. On the one hand, we have a "*WestWorld*" sort of storyline in which the player is vacationing on a medieval "*Fantasy Island*." On the other, we have a design that borrows presentation modes from every adventure game genre. In all of five minutes, one can experience a free-scrolling, first person 3-D environment; a Sierra-style third person environment; digitized, animated images; fully animated cartoon images in the vein of the *Dragon's Lair* laser disk game; as well as many odd cinematic effects, all thrown into a blender and *frapped* into a chunky adventure game melange. Top everything with a dose of exaggerated Jerry Lewisesque slapstick and we have one bewildering game. All a nonplussed American can shruggingly say is, "*Vive la difference?!*"
IBM (No price provided). Circle Reader Service #8.

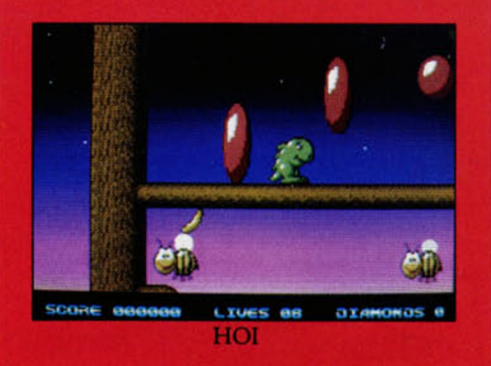
Konami
Buffalo Grove, IL.
(708) 215-5111

GODS: As previewed in *CGW* #96, this action game set within the mythos of the Greek pantheon is more than just "twitch, flex and die." With a variety of keys, doors, traps, and levers to twiddle as well as "kinetic-strategy" problems that involved arcade action combined with strategy, it looks as if this action hulk might actually have a brain. Amiga, IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

NFL: As previewed in *CGW* #94, this game is to football as **Accolade**'s *Hardball III* is to baseball, that is, a solid game balanced more toward the action-oriented gamer than toward those with a more statistical bent. The game boasts an NFL team name license but not an individual player name license (Pssst, here's a tip. You can change the player names if you want, but if it comes down to the Player's Association, you don't know me and I don't know you.). IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

The Learning Company
6493 Kaiser Drive
Fremont, CA 94555
(800) 852-2255

METROGNOMES' MUSIC: While many "edutainment" products teach the three R's (that is, Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic),



HOI


Eternam


Gods



NFL


Metrognomes

Metrognomes has the fourth R "Rhythm." Actually, that is only a part of what kids (and this tin-eared parent) can learn. Several games are included in the package which teach about tempo, pitch, beat, notes, etc. through 27 popular songs. Recommended for ages 4-7, parents will need to do very little explaining before kids can go wild with the mouse and start exploring on their own. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Maxis
Orinda, CA
(510) 254-9700

A-TRAIN: In the "software toy" tradition established by Maxis in their *Sim* line, comes this *Monopoly/Railroad Tycoon* hybrid. Players/tinkerers must build a rail network, establish routes, and schedules trains in order to create a profitable line. They can then branch out and build high-rise office space, stores, golf-courses, amusement parks, hotels, and ski resorts on their way to acquiring an immense empire, through their "company-town". There's even a simple stock market model in which one has the option to invest in 24 stocks. Without any competition, save for one's own management ineptitude, users play the game of high finance in a bubble. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Mindscape
Novato, CA
(415) 883-3000

THE FOUR CRYSTALS OF TRAZERE: The story is nothing new — a kingdom under attack by the forces of evil — and certainly the game elements we've seen before — a four member party of adventurers of traditional class-types, attributes, and abilities, with an ingredient-mixing magic system and a real time combat system. Yet, though comprised of hackneyed elements as it is, *Trazere* does offer, quite literally, a new perspective on role-playing. The main interface looks very much like EA's *Populous* with its 3-D "isometric" world view and game control icons scattered about the periphery. Also adding a nice touch is the fact that the player's party-of-four can actually play both a strategic and tactical part in the war going on around them by both engaging enemy armies in combat and recovering items of power for use by the forces of light. All in all, *Trazere* can be a fairly complete part of a nutritious CRPGing diet. Amiga, IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

Pilo+ Software
P.O. Box 811
Middleton, WI 53562
(800) 745-6758

PC PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ANALYZER: Fortunately, the "PC" in this product's title does *not* stand for "Politically Correct." Instead, this historically correct time machine is a combination database and almanac of past presidential elections, complete with

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Circle Reader Service #78

charts and graphs (which can all be printed out). While many questions about past elections can be answered, winning strategies for the 1992 election can also be explored. Designed by an educator for enjoyable classroom use, *Election Analyzer* will poll well with all budding social scientists. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

QQP
1046 River Ave.
Flemington, NJ 08822
(908) 788-2799

SOLITAIRE'S JOURNEY: As previewed in issue #95 (page 100), this amazing collection of 105 solitaire games is built around a fine graphic look, including "campaigns" to link games played (into "quests" and "journeys"). If you don't buy this game for yourself, get it as the perfect gift (then, borrow it). IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

RBM Software
13117 Broughton Way
Austin, TX 78727-3147
(512) 388-0830

FIELD GENERAL 6.0: This shareware gridiron simulation boasts a stout list of features including weather effects, an opponent tendency-tracking feature and lots of little options, like the use of two point conversions, International rules play and a no-huddle offense. Though the game action is not animated in any way, the play is shown via a chalkboard feature which traces the players' paths during the action. The game does not support any current or historical team play, but looks like a quick, thorough way for two pigskin nuts to lock their strategic horns over a couple frosties (drinking with the A.I. is not recommended). If placed upon the field of available football simulations, this product would most likely be an ugly, though tough and wiley nose-guard. Supports CGA and VGA graphics modes. IBM ($25.98). Circle Reader Service #16.

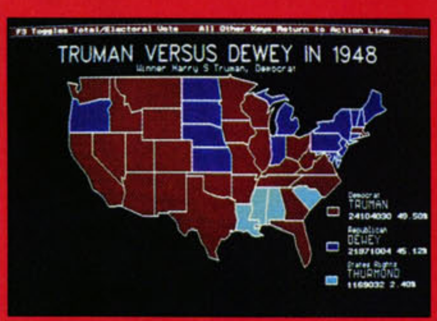
Software Toolworks
Novato, CA.
(800) 234-3088

WORLD ATLAS: Recent global events have so revitalized the cartography industry that a vigilant paranoic could easily size up a conspiracy theory to fit. Now, add to the slew of reworked, revised and re-revised world atlases this package which now "INCLUDES MAPS OF THE REPUBLICS," as well as a horde of nifty features that will send the geographically minded into a paroxysm of delight. Included are 4,400 maps, graphics of world flags, audio of national anthems, graphs, tables, and data, data, data. New features include the ability to transfer data out of the program for use in presentations, the ability to input new data at one's whim, and a mess of hypertexty marking, notemaking, and linking capabilities. It's certainly the last atlas one will need — this

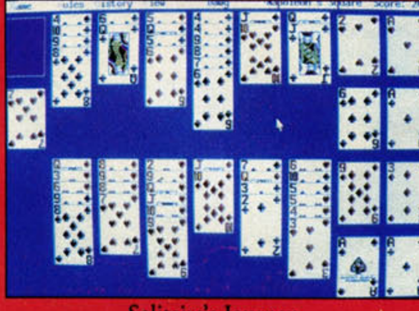

A-Trains

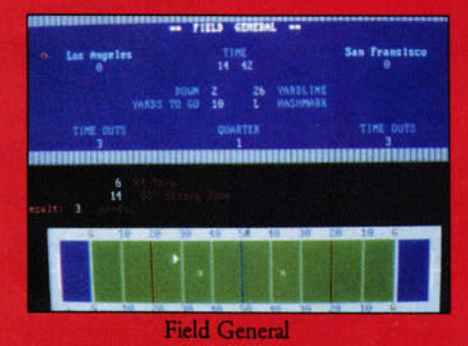


The Four Crystal Jewels of Trazere



PC Presidential Elections Analyzer


Solitaire's Journey



Field General

month. IBM (69.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

Spectrum Holobyte
Alameda, CA.
(510) 522-1164

CRISIS IN THE KREMLIN: As previewed in CGW #95, this game is a simulation of holding sand in your fist. Your fist is that of the Soviet General Secretary and the sand is played by the former Soviet states. The player's task is to manipulate the various social, political and economic models in an attempt to mold the Soviet Union in his own image. "Live" TV footage documents the players success and failure. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #18.

SSI
Sunnyvale, CA
(408) 737-6800

TONY LA RUSSA EXPANSION DISKS: The CGW "in" basket runneth over with a slew of expansion disks for *Tony La Russa's Ultimate Baseball.* Hold on to your caps, ball fans — these may knock your stirrups off. Reaching into the magic box we pull out both the *American & National League Stadium Disks.* Sold separately, these two disks contain the blueprints for such classic ballyards as the Old Yankee Stadium, Griffith Park, Old Comiskey Park, as well as all active Major League stadiums. Next, we pull out the *Fantasy Manager Disk* which enable fantasy nuts to draft up a division, or league, or any combination. A Tony La Russa ROM construct will even advise you on the draft. One can design manager personalities and even their team uniforms. Finally, we come to both the 1990 and 1991 team disks including all that juicy data that has been accruing in the stat books for the last two years. Combine all these together and we've got a lot of boxes and a lot of disks, all of which you must purchase seperately. IBM — Stadium Disks ($19.95), 1990 & 1991 Team Disks ($19.95), Fantasy Manager ($19.95). Circle Reader Service #19

Villa Crespo Software
Highland Park, IL

COFFEE BREAK SERIES: These are the first four games in a line of budget priced software products that were designed for fast, exciting play. Packaged in brightly colored 5.5" square boxes which are only .5" deep, they are, perhaps, the first impulse item software.

CASINO CRAPS: With many suprising little features that we didn't expect to see in a budget priced item, *Casino Craps* has the box man changing shifts and the dice being passed to colorful characters around the table. Of course, there's a quality craps game in that little box, with all of the betting features you would find in a first class casino. IBM ($12.95). Circle Reader Service #20.

DR. WONG'S JACKS+ VIDEO POKER: A slightly "stripped down" but still remarkably comprehensive version of their *Stanford Wong's*

Taking A Peek

Video Poker, the fine, core elements of the game have remained as has some of the important play analysis options. Some play variations and sound support are also included, giving a lot of "oomph" to this little package. IBM ($12.95). Circle Reader Service #21.

AMARILLO SLIM'S 7 CARD STUD: A faithful honing down of a single game offered from their *Amarillo Slim Dealer's Choice* product, it maintains all of the relevant options (such as betting limits, check and raise, antes, etc.) and sound effects (including digitized male and female voices). With a full, eight-player table and complete statistical analysis, Las Vegas gamblers will enjoy this casino standard on a disk. IBM ($12.95). Circle Reader Service #22.

ON TARGET: This is clearly a piece of "souped up shareware in a box," but *what* a piece of shareware! The classic two-player artillery duel of estimating firing angles and varying the gunpowder has evolved nicely into a sci-fi motif. Fought against a night backdrop, players score points for "casualties" when taking out the opponent's cannon. Player histories and variables such as wind add a lot of replayability to a long time favorite. IBM ($12.95). Circle Reader Service #23.

Virgin Games
Irvine, CA
(714) 833-8710

DUNE: A grand adventure game with strategy elements, the player takes the role of Paul "Muad' Dib" Atreides who must overcome the torrent of problems post by the political machinations of the House Harkonnen and the hostile environment of Arrakis itself. Visually appealing, the storyline is somewhat loosely based on the both the books *and* the David Lynch film, creating situations and imagery that will seem new and familiar at the same time. The French (who designed this product) have a way with Fremen, and with so much world to explore and so many familiar characters to interact with, Melange may prove to be the spice of adventure gaming. IBM ($49.99). Circle Reader Service #24.

THE MAGNETIC SCROLLS COLLECTION: The creators of the graphic adventure adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* have put together a "best of the rest of" package that includes a most unlikely threesome of interactive novels. In *Fish!* players assume the role of an inter-dimensional agent on the tail of the Seven Deadly Fins, a slippery school of anarchists with ichthyocidal intentions. In *Corruption,* gamers play the part of a young, upwardly mobile corporate exec who discovers that there are some rotten logs on mahogany row. And in *The Guild of Thieves,* players don the persona of a young man with a gift for sleight of hand who must lie, cheat, and steal, steal, steal his way into the most elite of thieving circles. All three stories are told through the very flexible Magnetic Scrolls interface, which supports a small screen of graphics, iconic mapping and inventory system, a compass rose movement icon, and, of course, a text parser interface. All three are written and illustrated remarkably well, and boast a healthy dose British humour at its wackiest worst. Amiga, IBM ($59.99). Circle Reader Service #25.CGW

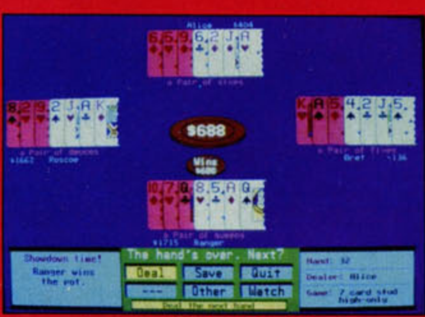

World Atlas



Kremlin


Casino Craps

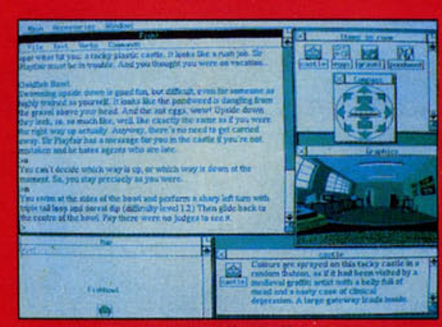

On Target



Amarillo Slim's 7 Card Stud



Dr. Wong's Jacks + Video Poker


Magnetic Scrolls Collection



Bravo Romeo Delta



Flight, Camera, Action!

A Sneak Preview of Walt Disney Software's Stunt Island

by Tim Trimble

Sneak Previews are not designed to be reviews. They are feature articles based on "works in progress" that CGW's editors have deemed worthy of early coverage. These articles are not intended to provide the final word on a product, since we expect to publish appropriate review coverage when the game is completely finished.

The Script

[Camera angle - spot plane behind lead plane]

The bright red bi-plane dips and shifts slightly as the pilot attempts to line up with the open doors of the barn. The plane drops a hundred feet, but then levels out again as the barn draws closer.

[Camera angle - behind tractor]

The green farm tractor moves slowly along the front of the barn door.

[Camera angle - spot plane behind lead plane]

The tractor becomes visible now as the bi-plane moves closer to the ground, now lined up with the barn door. The tractor is in front of the barn door as the plane moves closer, the ground a blur from the speed of the plane. As the tractor barely moves past the opening of the barn door, the plane flies past the tractor and into the barn.

[Camera angle - inside barn from back door toward front]

The plane enters the barn as the tractor slips out of view. The plane rushes to-

ward and then, over the camera, as it exits out the back door.

[Camera angle - from hot air balloon behind and above barn]

The plane exits from the barn door and then, climbs while making a sharp left roll. The plane ends up inverted and flies past the balloon with the view of the barn below the plane.

[Camera angle - spot plane behind lead plane]

The bi-plane rolls back to normal level flight towards the setting sun.

The Stunt Man

With the abundance of flight simulation and flight combat simulation products in the computer gaming market, it is nice to see a fresh and innovative product come along. *Stunt Island* from **Walt Disney Software** is such a product. While these may be bold words, they are quite well-deserved since Disney has taken the concepts of flight simulation, movie making and world building to create a product that will stand out from the rest. *Stunt Island,* which is planned for release in the fall of 1992, is being promoted as a stunt flying and movie-making simulator. However, my definition of *Stunt Island* is that it is a stunt flying, set creation, movie camera, film production and special effects team simulator. It may sound complicated, but it is actually quite easy.

The story of *Stunt Island* is that a bunch of movie studios got together and purchased a small group of islands off the coast of California for the sole purpose of providing a private place that specialized in the filming of high-risk stunts. The player assumes the role of stunt pilot, film editor, director or a mixture of these roles. As a pilot, the player can compete in a Stunt Pilot of the Year contest, fly various stunts in front of the cameras or just explore (translation: buzz) the island. The island itself offers a major treat to any armchair pilot looking for new thrills. There are canyons to fly through, trees to buzz, bridges to fly under, power lines, barns to fly through, mountains, lakes, ocean, rivers, desert, forests and lots more. One of the "canned" stunts that comes along with the product is the flying of a bi-plane through an open barn (as described above), which is quite good at getting the player used to the thrill and excitement of coming out the other end of the barn in one piece (after a few attempts, of course). There are also over 40 different types of aircraft available for flying stunts. For example, an F16, U2 spy plane, F117 Sealth fighter, 747, A10 Wart Hog, Cessna 172, Mig 29, and Mustang are just a small sample of what is available. (Wanna try a DC10 through a canyon? Actually, it is a little big for the barn.)

In the Stunt Pilot of the Year contest, the pilot is assigned increasingly difficult stunts to perform in exchange for bonuses. The fewer the number of takes to complete the stunt, the better the bonus becomes. At the end of the contest, the pilot with the best earnings will have the newly completed airfield named after him or her.

The Set

Flying is only a part of this incredible program. As the stunt coordinator, the player is able to create sets and stunts in just about any imaginable way. Using over a 1000 different objects (such as buildings, cars, people, aircraft, balloons, tents, clouds, etc.), the player can manipulate a scrolling map field to place and animate these objects for the stunt. The process of creating a set, scenery and a stunt can become quite time consuming and involved. The set can be as simple or as complex as the player wants it to be. Just like in the movie industry, it can sometimes take weeks to build a set for shooting two minute's worth of film. Each object can also have actions (sound, movement, effects) assigned to them when certain criteria are met. For example, when a bomb is dropped from the plane and hits the Transamerica building, the building can explode along with the sound of an explosion.

Up to eight cameras can be placed in almost any position for filming the stunt, which basically gives one camera in the airplane cockpit, one camera in the spot plane (which can be positioned at any angle around the stunt plane), and then six free cameras for placement anywhere on or above the island. The amount of zoom that a camera uses can also be adjusted. Via the use of the animation, the objects can also be made to fall down, roll or do any other type of movement. (I even succeeded at driving a "big foot" truck around in the woods and then, after getting it up to about 70 MPH getting it airborne and flying around the island. This *might* just be a feature in the pre-released version. grin)

The Editing Room

Another major portion of Stunt Island is the Post Production work. By using footage from the eight different cameras, the player is then able to enter the editing room and splice together a full feature action film for viewing in the movie theater. Via a split screen, the editor (player) is able to view any one of the eight films, define a film segment and then "paste" it to the actual movie footage. The films can be fast forwarded, stepped through, reversed, frozen and have special effects and sound added. This part of the program took a little getting used to (it helps to read the manual!), but once the controls become familiar then it is real easy to put together a "high quality" action shot. Other effects such as color shifting, fade, music and credits can be added to the film. The special effects will also support the use of the *Sound Blaster* products for recording voice and sound and incorporating them into the film. Once a movie has been completed, it can be viewed in the movie theater. Disney representatives have mentioned that a separate movie viewer may be included with the product that can be distributed freely to anyone for viewing films. (I can

see it now! Compuserve and BBSs will be packed with great action shots.)

The Film Critic

The graphics of *Stunt Island* are just down right great! Since the program is written completely in assembly language, the programmers have done a great job of



doing three-dimensional rendering and light source shading without compromising speed and smoothness. The shading of the aircraft will change as the camera angles around (or spot plane) moves to different perspectives. A large amount of work has also gone into the environment of *Stunt Island*. Instead of just plain old



flat brown or green for the land masses there are boulders, canyons, mountains and trees. Lots of trees!

Stunt Island has also done a good job with the flight characteristics of the planes. In the pre-release version that I used, the flight characteristics of the individual aircraft all seem to be the same, except for the speed variances, and climbs seem to go on forever. The folks at Disney assure us, however, that the flight dynamics of the aircraft will be greatly improved before the product is released.

The pre-release version of the manual is quite informative and contains a lot of pictures for demonstrating the usage of the program. A special section on the movie industry is also included and is quite helpful for understanding some of the problems and complexities of building sets, finding set locations and picking the right scenery.

Overall, *Stunt Island* is one incredible program. It is guaranteed to turn a lot of heads and maybe even set some new standards for "VCR" viewers in other flight simulation products. Walt **Disney Software** has done a great job of presenting the process and complexities of movie making, stunt design and stunt flying into a complete, easy to understand interface. Not only will this program be appealing to any armchair pilot, but it should also attract anyone who is interested in the movie industry or anyone that likes programs that allow the creation of environments (such as *SimCity*, etc.), since the building of sets and scenery can become quite involved. With this product, Disney Software is proving that they can live up to their own standard of good, clean and quality entertainment. After all, it was Disney that coined the word "Imagineering" and with *Stunt Island* the imagination can run wild!

CGW

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Industry News

RUMORS

Although most of the news in the software industry was centered around product announcements and demonstrations at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show, there are a few items which are worthy of note.

After a round of litigation in which **PC Globe** allegedly entertained two corporate suitors, **Broderbund Software** (*NASDAQ: BROD*) agreed to acquire **PC Globe**, the publisher of geographical software, for a one-time payment of $1.5 million to PC Globe shareholders. On June 5, 1992, a U.S. District Court judge dismissed all claims surrounding a previous acquisition agreement between **PC Globe** and **Intracorp** (parent company of the **Capstone** label). **Creative Labs** is expected to announce a 16-bit version of the *SoundBlaster Pro* sound board within the next few months.

Dark Horse Comics, the fast-growing and sometimes iconoclastic comics publisher in the Northwest, is believed to be working with **Origin** on a *Wing Commander* comic. James Hudnall, one of the most prolific **Dark Horse** scripters, will be writing the book.

Cineplay Interactive, publishers of *Free D.C.* and *Will Vinton's Playmation*, is currently polishing an as yet untitled presidential election game. One suggestion is "Lies, Damn Lies and Politics," but we're not sure that one will play in Peoria.

The University of Chicago has entered into an agreement with **Maxis** to provide students with copies of *SimCity* in order to test the abilities of new artificial intelligence software. The university's AI classes will observe how well their program can perform, in comparison to human urban planners, by using the *SimCity* simulation. The computer science professor incharge of the experiment, Dr. Kristian Hammond, says that they chose the program because, "*SimCity* is the closest thing we could find to real life for testing artificial intelligence on a personal computer. Traditional computerized games, such as chess, have narrowly-defined rules and a limited number of endings. In *SimCity*, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, but an unending series of decisions that can lead to a wide variety of results." University students will be running the simulation on Macintosh IIfx computers.

Accolade is expected to announce an *MLBPA* license for Hardball III data disks. Rumors state that the disks may use real photos of the players a la baseball cards and that the company may be signing an agreement with one of the more prominent collectors' card companies as part of this disk. Speculation also suggests that Accolade is looking for a way to incorporate 1992 season data in a 1992 release, but no final decision has been made.

SSI's *AD&D* line is expanding with *Spelljammer: Pirates of Realmspace*, based on the "people and paper" supplements published by **TSR, Inc.** The Spelljammer rules allow for "swords and sorcery" in space, sort of John Carter of Mars meets the ruling family of Amber.

In another licensing agreement, SSI will publish a computer game version of TSR's *A Line in the Sand*, land-based modern warfare in the Middle East.

Wargamers curious about the Carrier Strike Expansion Set from SSI, will be pleased to know it includes six scenarios (five historical and one "What if?" scenario). The latter is a 1947 campaign which takes the tack that the war continued and weapons advanced. The new "campaign" has missiles and advanced tactics. Like many other expansion sets, the new set will also update the game itself (featuring on-board ship repairs and some new algorithms).

For those who are concerned about the Rumor Guy's presidential campaign and absence from these pages, we will neither confirm nor deny his current success. We will expect him to return if either a Republican or a Democrat ends up in the White House, however. CGW

THE CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW:

Sometimes, it's better to leave matters a mystery. Sometimes, a hemline should stay that extra inch longer. Sometimes, it's preferable not to meet that Hollywood starlet in real life. Sometimes, it's disillusioning to find out from your favorite novelist what he or she really meant when that story was written. So, it may well be that the 1992 Summer Consumer Electronics Show will be remembered as one of those *sometimes.*

Maybe it wasn't such a good idea to open the doors on what used to be a trade show. Maybe it wasn't such a good idea to raise the curtain on consumer electonics' "dress rehearsal." After all, CES is a time when computer game publishers demonstrate releases that still have, at least, three to eight months more work ahead of them. A lot of consumers may see the software flash and game chrome jury-rigged together and actually *believe* that all those animated opening sequences (code conjured to mesmerize buyers and distributors) are actually what the playing portion of the game is going to look like. Plenty of gamers, walking through aisles more crowded than a level of *Lemmings*, are bound to think twice about a game that crashes during a CES demonstration or features place-holder art and text. Frankly, many are likely to discover that viewing the software presented at CES is akin to watching the daily rushes taken at a major motion picture studio. To those with experienced eyes, they can be very enlightening. To those who are more ac-



quainted with the end product, there is a major disappointment with the missing sounds, lack of continuity and absence of pacing due to the fact the footage has not yet been edited.

Opening the doors of CES to the consumers removed some of the mystery from the process, but provided publishers with several new problems. First, many corporate buyers did not want to rub elbows with the crowds. CES offers a cacophony of sounds even without the roar of the crowds. Adding the latter to the high decibel dissonance that already existed (and already made it tough to do business on the show floor) was the factor that made many buyers try to make all their appointments during the first two days of the show. While they could probably cover all of the major publishers during that time-span, they certainly did not have time to explore and check out those unusual little jewels to be found with smaller, niche publishers. This could make it harder than ever for innovative products from new start-up publishers and small publishers to hit the store shelves this fall and winter.

Second, some computer game publishers were so worried that consumers might

NO LONGER BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

carry away bad first impressions of unfinished product that they refused to show their works in progress on the show floor. Instead, they showed them off the floor, again behind closed doors. So, once again the consumer was not allowed to see what a complex process it is to bring a game to market.

Third, many publishers were forced to bring larger workforces to populate (and sometimes guard) their booths because of the incredible extended hours on Saturday night (the usual nine hours straight on one's feet is bad enough, but some worked most of twelve straight hours). The result was that many tired exhibitors who would normally have been delighted to deal with their mostly adoring, but sometimes complaining public, found themselves feeling slightly aggravated at them and later, feeling somewhat guilty for feeling that way about the people who support them by purchasing the products.



To be sure, the Electronic Industries Association (sponsors of the event) may have wanted to generate extra excitement and guarantee that the usually light Sunday agenda was as jampacked as the first three days, but it seems to have backfired. As a result, CES conversations which would normally have been full of the latest industry gossip and comparing of notes on this product and that one suddenly became focused on "What do you think about all of these consumers?" Ironically, the presence of the ones who support the industry turned the attention of the assembled industry away from those products that cause entertainment software to be an industry in the first place: the technological marvels that will excite us as the next few months progress.

We Can Rebuild Them, Better Than Before

Software engineering, seemingly unheard of during the debacle of late Christmas releases in 1991, appears to be taking hold. At **Sierra**, Steve Joseph was hired to oversee just such design forethought. Teams are now building tools that will allow objects and characters to function identically in many game settings (or even, possibly, on The Sierra Network). At **MicroProse**, Lawrence Schick and the rest of the design team are building their game of ship-to-ship combat in WWII's Pacific Theater with a view toward interconnecting it with its sequel, *Flat Top* (Working Title), carrier combat in the same theater.

New World Computing has an even bolder plan. Both the next *Might & Magic* (*Clouds of Xeen*) and its sequel (*Darkside of Xeen*) will use a refined version of the *M&M III* engine. Both will be

self-contained games with their own quests and endgames. However, players who have both on their hard drive will not only be able to move back and forth between games (each world is very literally the flip side of the other), but such players will be able to experience a third endgame equal to about 1/4 the size of



the game (assuming they complete both quests with the two games still on the hard drive.

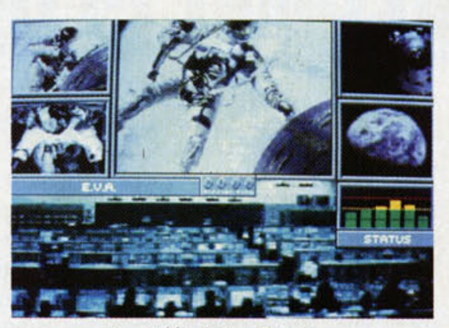
In a similar vein, **Origin** is planning mission disks for *Ultima VII: The Black Gate* which will actually serve as "add-in" disks rather than "add-on" disks. They are being designed so that they fit into sections of the game rather than simply adding more square miles to the game world.

Omnitrend Software, a small independent publisher and developer, may have actually foreshadowed such developments when they designed *Breach 2* and *Rules of Engagement* (man-to-man and ship-to-ship tactical combat, respectively) to interface such that one could board a ship via *Rules of Engagement* and finish the battle using *Breach 2*. Since *Breach 2* and *Rules of Engagement* were not distributed by the same company, however, the *Interlocking Game System* portion of both designs was never really marketed. Now, **Omnitrend** has signed an agreement with **Impressions** (the British software firm) and intends to release *Breach 3* and *Rules of Engagement 2* with particular emphasis on the interlocking nature of the games. Indeed, **Impressions** seems to be investing enough in the Connecticut firm that alert consumers could expect a major expansion in **Omnitrend**'s line by 1993.

Software engineering is not only a means of providing extra value and continuity for gamers, but it is also a means of solving some of the problems associated with the mass slippage which the entertainment software industry has seen in the last two years. The more companies can build on common elements, the more likely they will be to produce follow-up products in a reasonable amount of time.

Recycling Made Easy

One trend which CGW reported upon in the WCES Report (Part I, *CGW* #92, p. 26) is continuing. That trend is the use of ambient video. Originally seen in games like Chris Crawford's *Patton Strikes Back* (for **Broderbund**) and **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Crisis in the Kremlin*, this technique is soon to make its appearance in such titles as: **Three-Sixty**'s *Victory At Sea* (film footage of actual battles), **Interplay**'s *Castles II* (using scenes from Charles Laughton's *Henry the VIII*) and *Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space* (using news footage of presidential addresses and space launches), **Konami**'s (and **Spirit of Discovery**'s) *NFL Video Master Football* (using old NFL video footage), **Sega**'s *Joe Montana NFL Football* for their CD-ROM (using *some* video and digitized voice), **Psygnosis**' tentatively entitled *Carl Lewis Olympic Challenge* (digitized track and field footage) and **MicroLeague Sports**' upcoming line of sports games (using archival television footage). **Virgin**'s *Dune -CD* has the rights to 30 minutes of footage from the feature film and will likely use the bulk of it in the CD version.



Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space.

In addition to archival footage, many of the licensed film and television projects will be digitizing the sets and artwork from the original properties. Konami's *Batman Returns* digitized and enhanced pictures of the actual movie sets (even though the game is not keyed to the film's plot). **Capstone's** *An American Tail: The Computer Adventures of Fievel and His Friends* uses digitized backgrounds from the films to provide atmosphere for their potpourri of puzzles and *L. A. Law* uses digitized images of the actual sets as the backdrop for the adventure game. **Azeroth Software**, developers of the *Adventures of Inspector Gadget* game, have been able to digitize both backgrounds and characters to use in that game.

In addition to using archived video to enhance products, several companies are shooting their own video for use in computer games. **Sony Electronic Publishing** is nearing release on *Sewer Shark*, an interactive "action"-style game for Sega's $400 CD-ROM platform (which includes both the Genesis and the CD-ROM player) to be launched in the U.S. this September (with up to 20 titles available, at launch, in September) where the player



guides his/her robot through a maze of previously filmed sewers and corridors. They also have a music video game for the MPC platform called, *Make Your Own Video*. Both products were originally developed for the aborted interactive television format from Hasbro of a few years back. The use of videotape in the earlier format caused time-lags and access problems, but the use of CD-ROM storage has allowed the developer, **Smart TV**, to overcome those problems and present playable designs. **Sega** is also publishing a **Smart TV** design for their CD-ROM system. Entitled *Night Trap*, the game requires players to rid a haunted house of a multitude of ghouls. We are told that a pre-infamous Dana Plato played one of the women which the player must rescue during the game. Also, as many CNN viewers already know, **Buena Vista Software**'s *Unnatural Selection* (a wild strategy game of genetic engineering gone wild) uses footage that was filmed at Walt Disney Studios, especially for the game. Finally, **Cyberdreams** used digitized film in order to get smooth animation in their *Darkseed* product, an adventure game set in the universe of macabre science-fantasy artist, H. R. Giger (whose work inspired the original *Alien*).

Three-Deep

Another trend which has been noted in the last few CES Reports is the use of continually more sophisticated three-dimensional graphics. Last August (*CGW* #85, p. 12), the first installment of our Summer CES coverage talked about **Novalogic's** *Ultrabots* and *Battleground 2000* projects (originally developed for **Data East**). The former used fully-rendered three-dimensional models and looked like a major breakthrough, while the latter looked amazingly like the 3-D polygon-filled technology with terraced overlays used in Chris Robert's *Strike Commander* for **Origin** (also covered in that report).



This year, **Novalogic** states that both of their products carried over from 1991 are ready to be published, but that financial/legal considerations are holding up their publication. The company has continued to advance their technology, however, and demonstrated *Maximum Overkill*, a helicopter simulation that processed 3-D elevation on the fly. In the demonstration, the helicopter flew through a three-dimensional Grand Canyon at an impressively fast frame rate. John Garcia, president of **Novalogic**, states that the programmers have had to go back to pure assembly programming in order to get the speed required.

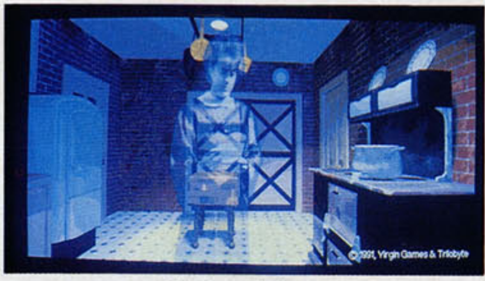


Maximum Overkill

Also noted in the WCES Report was the fact that **Paragon Software** was capturing 3-D models to film and creating computer models, complete with light-sourcing in their *Mantis: XF5700 Experimental Space Fighter* game. Meanwhile, Chris Roberts continues to insist that *Strike Commander* will do all that he's promised by the time it is released this fall. At CES, Roberts demonstrated 3-D rendered buildings where Garoud shading was used over polygon-filled targets, as well as texture mapping and light sourcing (to enhance detail and lighting angles). Though the demonstration ran at 15 frames per second on a 486-based IBM computer, **Origin** was not showing a playable simulation at that rate.

Amiga owners are not left out of the three-dimensional technology, either. In **Psygnosis**' *Air Support*, gamers will need to wear 3-D glasses (provided with the product) in order to get the right perspective. *Air Support* features real-time battles in which the gamer chooses between 16 different combat vehicles.

Maxis' *El-Fish* (short for electronic fish) may very well become the ultimate executive desk toy or computer-literate yuppie showcase. The program allows players to "breed" 3-D rendered fish with catalogued genetic characteristics. The fish will perform with "authentic" behaviors similar to the models of the "artificial life" school. The program generates these behaviors on the fly and the fish swim "realistically" around the electronic fish tank presented on one's monitor.



The Seventh Guest

Of course, if fish are not one's style, there is yet another piece of 3-D software that just might be a popular "yuppie toy." **Cineplay Interactive** is publishing *Will Vinton's Playmation for Windows*. Instead of using polygons, the system uses "spline patching." This technique allows the user to sculpt and bend the objects which are being defined, rather than restricting the "creator" to the blocky look identified with pure polygons.

The animation for **Interplay's** *Battle Chess 4000* also uses clay figures to get a three-dimensional feel. *Battle Chess 4000* features improved algorithms (tested in the company's impressive *Checkmate* product) and a new set of animations built around a zany pulp science fiction universe instead of the fantasy genre utilized in the original *Battle Chess* release. **Interplay** is also publishing a **Super NES** game called *Claymates*. Featuring cute clay animations, players metamorphose from one type of funny animal into another as they move from obstacle to obstacle. In a different venue, **Dynamix** is using some of their 3-D technology to develop a football game with a unique look and feel. As yet untitled, the game looks to be a hybrid of strategy and realistic action.



Will Vinton's Playmation

MicroProse's *F-15 Strike Eagle III* takes 3-D mapping to a new level of realism. Any computer pilot who identifies with the phrase "going downtown" will get a new sense of what that means in the upcoming *F-15 Strike Eagle III*. Andy Hollis' team has taken an aerial military map of Baghdad and calculated a three-dimensional map from the elevations noted on that map. When players perform missions around this simulated Baghdad, they will be encountering more of "the real thing" than ever before.



Battle Chess 4000

Still, the most talked about use of 3-D



rendering at SCES, like WCES before it, was **Virgin's** *The Seventh Guest.* Not satisfied with filling up one CD with quality art, animation and an original score from The Fat Man (George Alistair Sanger of *Loom, Wing Commander* and *Castles* fame), **Trilobyte** (the game's developer) is filling two CDs with some of the most remarkable art and sound ever seen in a computer game. The adventure is set in a haunted mansion and does a marvelous job of conveying the eerie atmosphere of the storyline.

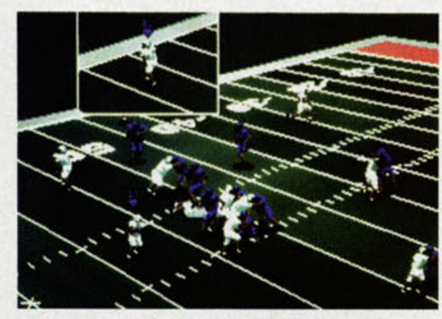
Tailored to Fit

One trend that has always been in the computer game industry, but seems to be resurfacing with more versatility than ever, is the ability to customize a program to meet one's own agenda. Sports games, particularly statistics-based sports games, have generally had the ability to customize rosters and leagues. Also some strategy games, such as **Strategic Studies Group's** *Carriers at War* and *Battlefront* series, **Strategic Simulations, Inc.'s** *Warship* and *Panzer Strike* games and **MicroPlay's** *UMS II,* have always had a design kit, while products like **RAW Entertainment's** *Action Stations!* add-on disk provide a design capacity for existing programs that allow players to generate their own scenarios. In that tradition, **QQP** announced that they would be publishing a deluxe edition of *The Perfect General* in 1993 that would include a design kit, along with upgraded AI and the addition of aircraft and machine guns. Ironically, SSG's *Carriers at War* (for the IBM) could have been shipped in the first quarter, but has been significantly delayed by the publisher's decision to include a design kit which is significantly more powerful than the one in the original Apple version of *CAW.*

At Summer CES, several games emphasized this "tailoring" factor in games. Most noticeable was the number of gamer-controlled options in **Maxis'** *SimLife.* Whereas *SimEarth* was often criticized because the gamer could not control enough or see enough direct result from his/her decisions, *SimLife* lets players develop their own creatures, food webs, mating habits, adaptive capacities, mutational probabilities and more. Not only can one develop biomes from the ground up, but one can use the simple paint program provided to create the right look for



Sim Life



Dynamix Football

a plant. Not only can one establish the "rules" for a given species by using on-screen "sliders" and a plethora of on-line help features, but one can make that creature look like a mythological beast or a hybrid creature using the paint program.

Paragon Software's *Challenge of the Five Realms* will allow gamers to use a paint program (or possibly, import a digitized photograph of themselves) in order to place themselves into the fantasy game (to be available on both standard IBM clones and in a CD-version). The programmers are using a "face technology" that should allow one's custom on-screen characters to make "realistic" facial expressions during the course of the game.

Also, **Impressions** will publish a construction kit as part of **Omnitrend's** *Paladin 2*, the sequel to their earlier fantasy wargaming system which translated *Breach* into enchanted realms. The construction kit will enable players to modify the existing quests and create original ones.

Reach Out and Crush

Modem games continue to garner a following and, at this CES as in the past, several important announcements were made for those who like to "reach out and crush" human opponents rather than artificial ones. **New World Computing** has purchased the rights to do an IBM network version of *Spaceward Ho!*, the strategic space conquest game that has enraptured so many Macintosh gamers. According to Jon van Canegham, the game will allow up to 19 human or computer players, according to any mix, to compete. Another encouragement is that **QQP's** *Conquered Kingdoms* (see the description under "This Means War") will feature turn-based modem play. In addition, **Impressions** officially stated that they are working toward modem play as a significant part of their mission. **Three-Sixty's** *Theater of War* will also allow gamers to play by modem.

Flight simulation fans should note that



MicroProse and **Spectrum HoloByte** have announced that they plan for gamers to be able to link *F-15 Strike Eagle III* and *Falcon 3.0* for modem-to-modem dogfights. **Psygnosis'** *Armour-Geddon* (an IBM conversion with enhanced graphics from those of the Amiga and Atari ST, as

well as a CD-ROM version with bit-mapped vehicles) will not support modem play, but will allow gamers to compete head-to-head with serial connection (null modem).

This Means War

QQP not only announced an upcoming expansion disk to *The Perfect General* entitled, *Greatest Battles of the 20th Century*, but the company announced three other wargames as well. In addition to the previously mentioned deluxe edition of *The Perfect General*, QQP plans to release *Battles of Destiny* and *Conquered Kingdoms*. The former is a game of conquest in which the player tries to gain control of a multitude of random worlds and the latter is a medieval strategy game. *Battles of Destiny* is expected to feature decision-making on a tactical scale, rather than the strategic scale normally assigned to world conquest games.

Conquered Kingdoms is due in Fall '92 and is expected to appeal on several levels. First, the game allows balanced competition (21 different AI levels for those who cannot find a human opponent) in the medieval world with melee combat, ranged combat and siege combat where eight basic (historical) units and seven fantasy units can mix it up across nine different world maps. Second, as noted earlier, the game allows players to compete via modem. Finally, there is a campaign game in which the player tries to become King of all Cascatia (the imaginary land in which the campaign is set). Players build fiefdoms and recruit non-player characters on their way to their ultimate coronation. Combat is handled in an enhanced scissors, rock, paper style with new elements (i.e. spies with much the same power as in *Stratego*) thrown in.

Conquered Kingdoms is only one of the wargames based on medieval combat which are due to appear in 1992. Mindcraft's *Siege* takes place in the world of *The Magic Candle* and allows players to recruit and deploy armies consisting of numerous fantasy races, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. The graphics are outstanding and the on-going real-time combat offers a different style of game than the turnbased QQP game. **Interplay's** *Castles II: Siege and Conquest* offers yet another style of game. Built off the successful *Castles* system, the new design not only adds the visual chrome discussed earlier, but also features enough strategic elements to satisfy the wargamers among the castle building set.

Strategic Simulations, Inc. is no longer known as, primarily, a wargame company, but the prolific publisher continues to publish its share of wargames. Gary Grigsby's *Carrier Strike* (see the review in this issue) was just released for the IBM and a new (and huge!) game based on the entire Pacific Theater of War is on its way later this year. Meanwhile, two British publishers are attempting to take up some of the slack left by SSI's less ambitious schedule. **Impressions** plans to release *Air Force Commander* in the U.S. by the time this issue hits the stands. It involves air warfare in the Persian Gulf. In 26 scenarios, the player acts as the overall commander for all air resources and the ground support necessary to "keep 'em flying." In a different vein, **Impressions** has revamped their *Samurai* game for release as *Conquest of Japan*. Although the overall campaign is non-historical, the real-time miniatures-style battles use authentic formations from feudal Japan and the action is very interesting. **RAW Entertainment** is currently readying *Fleet Commander* (see the design notes in last month's issue and the current issue), WWII strategic naval conflict and has just released *Napoleon I*. The former will be available on the IBM format and the latter is strictly available on Amiga and Atari ST at the present time.



Batman Returns

Perhaps, the most ambitious publisher of wargames in the current market, however, is **Three-Sixty Pacific**. Their *V is for Victory* series (with *Utah Beach* available on both Macintosh and IBM) has received significant acclaim from "converted" board wargamers and a second game, based on the eastern front (WWII) battle of *Velikiye Luki*, is slated for release before Christmas. Further, just in case wargamers were expecting more of the same from **Three-Sixty Pacific**, the company elected to publish an abstract wargame called *Theater of War* (see the sneak preview in this issue).

Finally, **Three-Sixty** plans to release *Patriot*, covering strategic land warfare in the Persian Gulf, in the fall. *Patriot* uses some novel approaches that bend wargame conventions. For example, there are no pre-set and non-modifiable zones of control in this wargame. Instead, the user shapes the zone of control as a means of assigning the patrol area to a given unit. Although the game is no longer slated to be a "land-based version of *Harpoon*," it does look like a fresh approach to command simulations.

More "Open Door" Policy

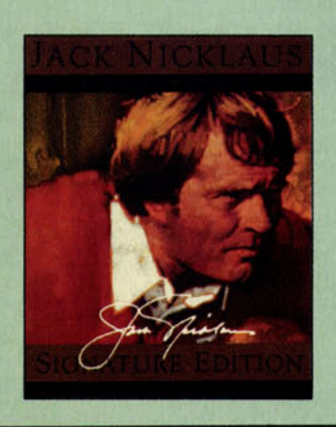
Next month, CGW will continue to summarize the exciting new possibilities unveiled at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show. Simulations, strategy games, adventure games, CRPGs and action games will be covered in Part II of our report. CGW



The Golden Bear Gets A Facelift

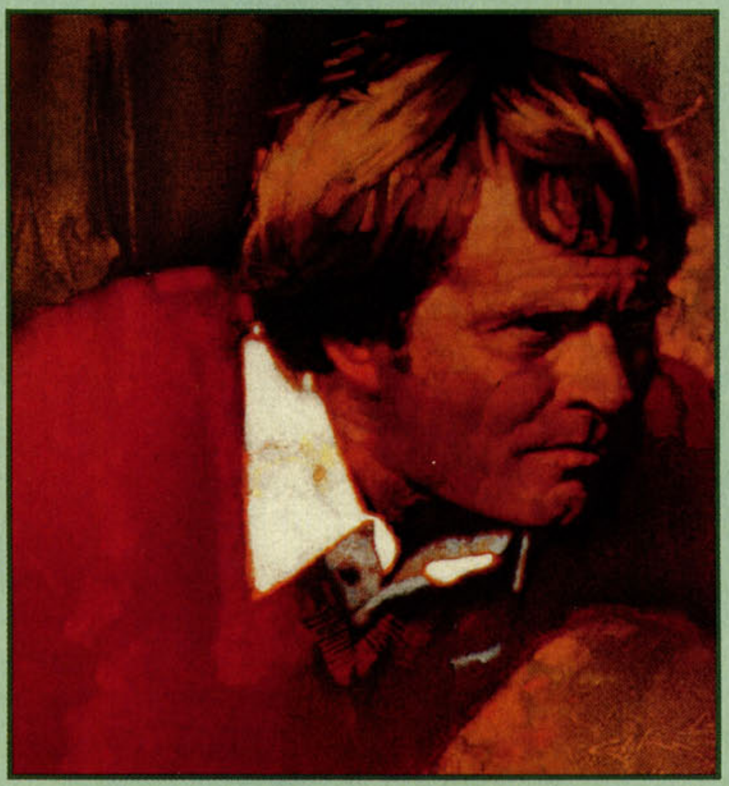
Jack Nicklaus Golf & Course Design: Signature Edition

by H.E. Dille



TITLE: Jack Nicklaus Golf & Course Design Signature Edition
SYSTEM: IBM (w/VGA, Hard Drive, 530K free, 16+MHz recommended)
of Players: 1-4
PRICE: $69.95
DESIGNER: Ned Martin, Sculpture Software, Inc.
PUBLISHER: Accolade, San Jose, California

Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf is more of an evolutionary than revolutionary design within the genre of computer golf games. Its predecessor, *Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf & Course Design*, was *revolutionary* in that it allowed players to duplicate their favorite courses from scorecards or design entirely new ones, limited only by their imaginations. Although *Unlimited* remains the only product that boasts this feature, it is constrained by lower resolution and a more limited palette, as well as poor sound card support. Consequently, when Access Software released *Links*, with near photographic quality, digitized graphics and superlative sound support, Accolade lost a significant portion of their market. Further, as additional *Links* course disks were developed, an increasing number of players made the transition. *Signature* represents Accolade's bid to recapture some of these converts, as well as retain and reward their loyal *Unlimited* following with some significant, if not revolutionary, program enhancements.



A View From The Gallery

The most noticeable improvement is, predictably, the shift to the VGA standard. Although *Links* will retain the title for "best graphics overall," players will be delighted with the additional flexibility *Signature* provides them in the Course Design module. Virtually any object can be created in loving detail using a palette of 176 colors, six standard brushes and seven distinct stroke styles. Objects may also be exported from course to course and the edit feature utilized to jazz up existing *Unlimited* courses for use by the new system (**Warning:** Once modified, the courses will no longer be usable by *Unlimited*.) Additionally, those players with a penchant for drawing programs will be happy to know that any graphics file with an .LBM or .PCX extension can be imported to *Signature*. This potential for truly individualized courses should prove exciting to players who frequent the Accolade bulletin board to swap designs (408-296-8800 1200/2400 baud, 408-296-8810 9600 baud). For those without the patience or inclination to develop images pixel by pixel, *Signature* comes with a full library of objects for modification or incorporation into course designs. Another improvement over *Unlimited* is the ability to "plot and play" newly designed holes without exiting the module, thereby allowing for refinement of each hole "on the fly" as it were.

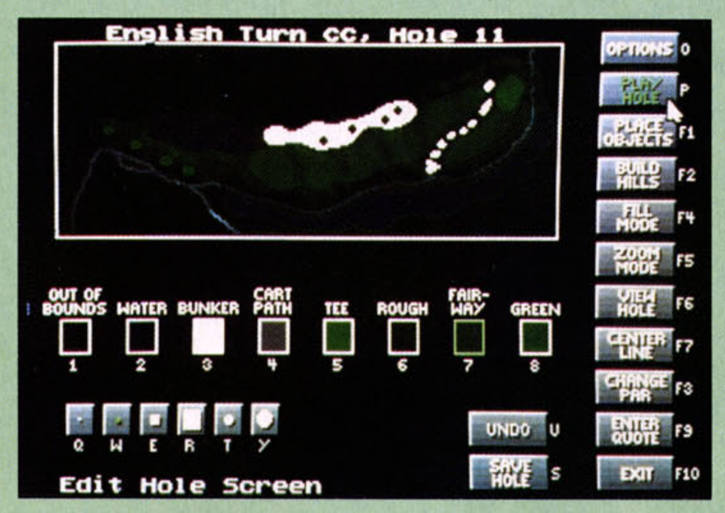
Finding A Foursome

Computer golf, unlike its real life counterpart, is often a solitary pursuit. Although *Signature* supports up to four players on a single machine, finding a foursome is as difficult as ever. Fortunately, Accolade will soon announce a limited partnership with the **Prodigy** network that may prove the most evolutionary development that *Signature* has to offer to owners of other programs. Beginning in June, **Prodigy** will offer *Signature* players on-line tournament play for an additional $7.95 per month. Players can compete in Opens with up to 149 contestants, or organize an Invitational with 4-32 players of their choice. Further, tournament courses can be downloaded and played off-line, a major cost savings to those among us with excessive BBS costs. Players will be required to post their scores daily to keep the leader board current. Additionally, **Prodigy** will offer a separate area for upload/download of course designs and object files. Given that on-line support of various computer and fantasy baseball leagues has generated a major following, I predict that the Accolade/Prodigy initiative will receive substantial backing from modem golfers.

The First Tee

Before addressing the ball, players must become members of the club. New club members establish their player files by specifying their level of difficulty: novice, advanced or expert (increasing impact for wind affect and proper wrist snap), which

tees they will use, from Championship to



Ladies, and may even edit the character's style to conform to a favorite professional or one's own ability. Additionally, it is possible to dictate the character's proficiency with each club (expressed as a percentage) and strength (from 0 to 120 percent of the rated distance for a given club). These features can also be used to generate computer opponents. The program comes with a dozen pre-generated professionals, including the Golden Bear himself, but players may create an unlimited number of others for use in tournament play, another new improvement over *Unlimited.* Besides stroke and skins play, *Signature* offers tournament play for up to 72 players (only four may be human controlled "club members," however). Tournaments can be from one to five rounds and the leader board is displayed at the completion of each hole. While at the club house screen, one can also select the Driving Range, Putting Green or practice any hole on the course.

Playing A Round

The mechanics of *Signature* are virtually indistinguishable from those used by *Unlimited.* Players control the strength of their backswing and timing of their wrist snap on a sliding, graduated scale. The center section of the scale is divided into 10 percent increments of the rated distance for the chosen club, thereby allowing rudimentary control of the backswing, exclusive of wind or turf factors which can affect the distance of the shot. Good rules of thumb are to take one club size more than normal for light rough and two club sizes for heavy rough. Wind and course conditions are randomly generated at the beginning of each round and I was particularly impressed with how the program recreated the difference's between normal, wet and dry greens. Once on the green, players have a break indicator arrow with a numerical value (the higher the number, the greater the break) and an unobtrusive overlaying light green grid to assist in shot placement. The grid may be turned off at the player's discretion but the shadowing of the greens seemed insufficient to properly judge shots when this was done.

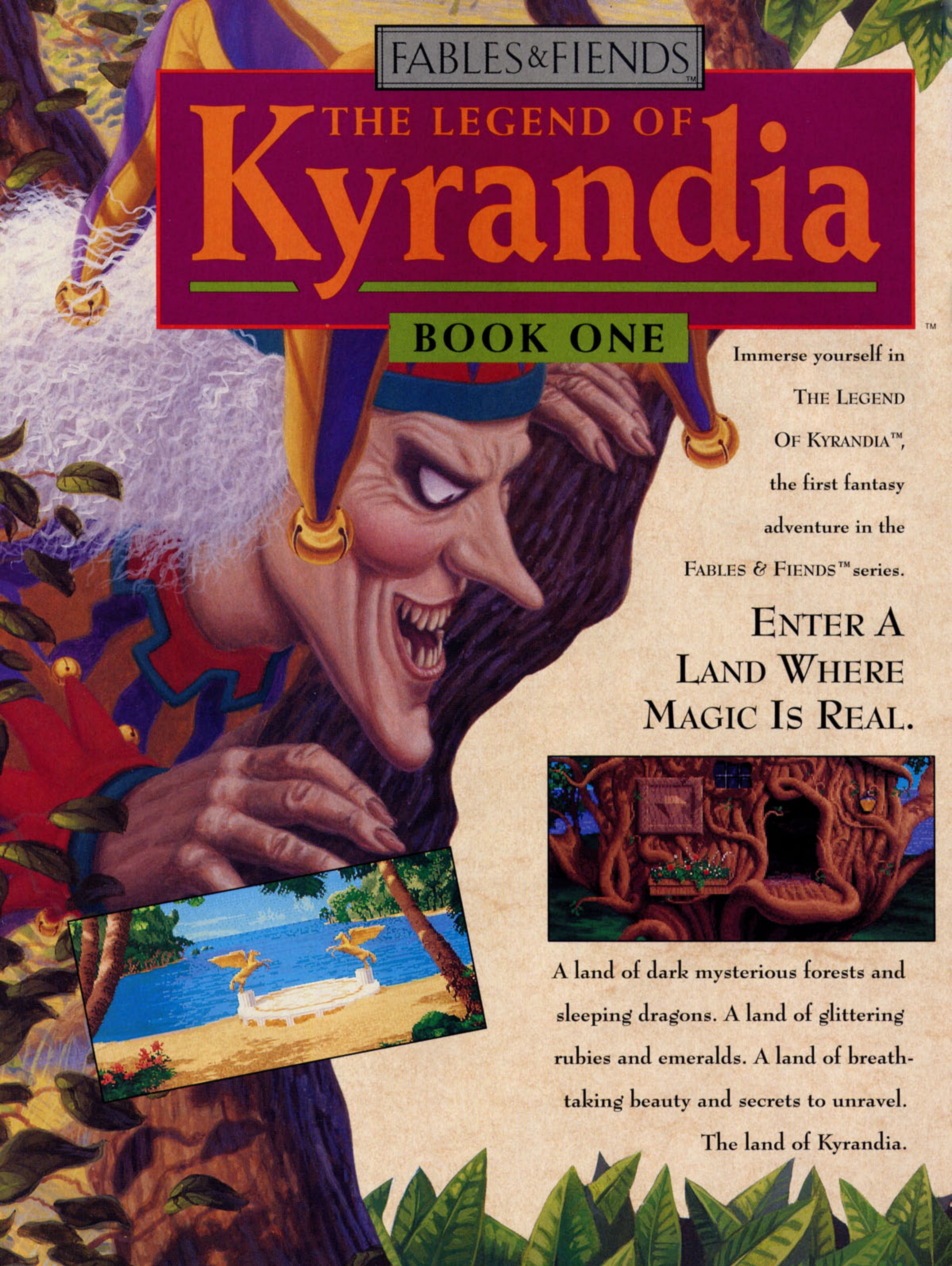
The 19th Hole

Back in the clubhouse, players will be happy to find that the program has kept a tally of their statistics for future reference. Also, a select few may find their names posted in the Hole in One club. The only things that seem to be missing are nasty golf course hot dogs and a cool one of choice.

As stated previously, *Jack Nicklaus Golf & Course Design: Signature Edition* doesn't break much new ground. As such, owners of its predecessor may rightfully question whether they want to pay the fairly hefty price for the new version (at this writing **Accolade** is *not* offering a reduced upgrade fee for registered users, but they should). Everyone else with an avid interest in the sport, however, could do a lot worse than *Signature* when considering a new purchase. It is a solid offering that will have a lot of legs, despite decreasing retail shelf life, largely due to the on-line offering from **Prodigy.** CGW







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Over There
Gothic Grandeur

by Paul Rigby



Coming from **Eldritch Software/Millennium** is a sort of Interactive Drama - type game which mixes adventure with role-playing and is played in the first-person perspective. Called *Daughter of Serpents*, the storyline is rather complex and interwoven, so much so that spouting too much about it might blow the whole plot. However, Eldritch's Chris Elliot did offer, "It's about ghastly things happening in 1920s Egypt, Alexandria to be precise. Very much in the Lovcraftian gothic horror mode. Without giving too much away it's basically about survivals from the great library of Alexandria — the greatest library in the classical world — and it's to do with a book of forbidden knowledge which was part of that library."

Creating a character, as in any RPG, is important but in this game it is more complex. There are six occupations to choose from. Each is important as players will only receive information in the game that their character, in real life, would normally receive. However, there is a certain amount of overlap, as happens in real life. For example, it is not impossible for an Egyptologist (an academic) to have magical skills (which are more mystical). The player's character can also 'specialize' in a subject. So, taking the Egyptologist, one might specialize in 'Egyptian Myths and Legends' or spread his/her 'points' evenly around other skills.

The challenge that this icon-driven game offers is almost all interaction-based. Combat is not used to any extent. Problems, surrounding people, are the essence of the gameplay. One of the most important and, potentially, exciting areas of the game is the interaction area. Characters speak via speech bubbles, similar to comics. However, all the text in the bubbles is hypertext. That is, the text is 'live'. One can click on selected words which will trigger the character to tell the player more about a person/place/object/etc. The hypertext is modified. That is, it is not a browsing tool as per usual. In *Serpents* it is "context-sensitive" which allows the text to respond to situations and a changing conversation. In addition, there are three threads running through the game (resulting in three separate endings). The release of *Daughter of Serpents*, on IBM and Amiga, is due around October.

Magnetic Scrolls is developing a solo-character RPG called *Haunted* (a working title) due for release on the IBM in November. The player visits a house that they have recently inherited from a deceased relative. However, expect the horror to follow. Wandering the endless corridors (with the aid of automapping) the player will be confronted with over 20 'miscreations' of life, controlled by an entity that possesses the house, but some of these creatures will be valuable in helping to release the house from the entity's grip.

Switching genres, **Microprose UK** and development house **Sleepless Knights** are working on the sequel to *Airborne Ranger*. *Special Forces*, as the game is entitled, much more resembles **Interstel's** *Dragon Force* than its immediate predecessor in its execution, however. The game asks the player to compile a team by studying the specialist skills required for each of the sixteen missions throughout the world. One can gather intelligence about the enemy and plan lines of attack for a wide variety of terrain, climate and environments. The player is able to control his men individually or coordinate the activities of the team as a whole. Also, the team can create diversions, use covering fire and employ the tactics used by many real-life Special Force teams. *Special Forces* is out now out on the Amiga and Atari ST.

Next, from **Impressions**, is *Discovery — In the Steps of Columbus* a game which allows its

title to say it all. The game begins after Columbus has done the hard work. Then, it is the player's chance to discover six new worlds. One can sail in uncharted waters and, when land is found, build a settlement, initiate the ecological collapse of our mother Earth by chopping down forests (to simultaneously provide timber and space to build upon), grow crops, mine for minerals and then, ship the produce back home to sell and raise money to find further discoveries. *Discovery* is entirely a mouse driven game that allows the player to rustle up armies to invade competing colonies, develop settlements and so on. Extra features include eight types of ship, land and sea battles, mutiny, pirates, explorers poking their scouts into one's business and so on. *Discovery — In the Steps of Columbus* is currently available on the Amiga.

From the team who brought *Bloodwych* to the world, comes *Legend,* Mindscape's new CRPG for IBM and Amiga. The plot surrounds Trazere and the people within. The place is in chaos, as the people are suffering from hideous mutations. There is, as I'm sure everyone will be surprised to hear (wink, wink, nudge, nudge), an evil force at work. The "Why?"s and the "How?"s are left to the party of four independently controlled characters to figure out. The game offers a variety of viewpoints from the animated overhead map to the first-person static screens in the many towns to the 3-D isometric dungeon perspective which is viewed and interacted with in a similar way to *Populous.* Features include automapping, the ability to rally characters for battle, and an animated magic spell-mixing screen using mortar and pestle.

Created by 'The Grue!' for **Borphee Computers** is a text-only adventure for the Amiga called, *The Four Symbols* (*TFS*). Seems that the four sacred symbols have been stolen from the village church and the player has volunteered to bring them back. Well, I say volunteered — the player has also been accused of witchcraft, so it's either that or the big barbecue! A large game of around 100 locations, *TFS* contains no real mazes, displays some solid research into the game's various subject areas, lots of devious puzzles and a few intriguing NPCs.

Priced at £6.50 and available from Borphee Computers, 64 County Road, Ormskirk, England, L39 1QH.

Anyone who would like to contact me can do so on **CompuServe** (75300,1503) or by mail to 20 Malvern Road, Liverpool, England, L6 6BW [please include three 'international reply coupons' for a reply].

Note: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from:

Computer Adventure World,

318 Kensington, Liverpool England, L7OEY

Tel: 01144-51-263-6306.

Premier Mail Order,

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Burnt Mills, Basildon, Essex England,

SS13 1BJ

Tel: 01144-268-590-766

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Circle Reader Service #105

Magical Spatial Tour

Reactor's "Spaceship Warlock"

by Tony Reveaux

TITLE: Spaceship Warlock
SYSTEM: Color Macintosh or greater with 4 MB RAM, CD-Rom drive
PRICE: $95
PROTECTION: None
PUBLISHER: Reactor, Chicago, Ill.

The possibility of placing one's character into the midst of a favorite film — whether *Star Wars, Aliens or Indiana Jones* — is getting closer all the time. Indeed, judging by the images spinning in on the silvery disk of a well-known CD-ROM, Reactor's *Spaceship Warlock*, the interactive movie experience is close enough that we hear credible reports of Macintosh users buying CD-ROM players just to be able to run *Warlock*. While floppy-based games are offering more interactive features and the artwork is getting better, the CD-ROM opens up an expanded realm of entertainment possibilities — and, of course, a few drawbacks. For example, although *Spaceship Warlock* allows one to save positions, one cannot count on being able to save once a chamber of any sort has been entered. If this occurs, a crash is imminent. Even with 8 MB of RAM on a Mac IIcx, there are times when *Warlock* warps out in a dive.

There is a good reason why *Spaceship Warlock* is among the top-selling CD-ROM titles of any genre. The richly rendered scenes, objects and characters that one searches, opens, pilots, converses with or fights against have the intense and vivid quality of a three-dimensional comic book that, at times, can convey the sensation of another reality. Instead of a full monitor screen picture, Reactor chose to shape the viewing area in a 3 1/2" x 9" (on a 13" monitor) letterbox format, greatly reducing the data load for the program. *Warlock's* aspect ratio is like 70mm theatrical film, and very close to the 9 x 16 rectangle of HDTV. As filmmakers have found, that proportion can enhance the flow of visual narrative.*Spaceship Warlock* is no exception.

Stuck on Stambul

Spaceship Warlock is a classic science fiction space adventure where the player feels like he or she is *inside* the game, trying to get the heck *outside* of the game environment. One's character awakens in a back alley (that party must have been something else!) on the hard-boiled, sullen city of Stambul on another planet where Earthers are strictly second class to the conquering Kroll — big buggy bipeds whose idea of a good time is bobbing for Terrans. Because this is a CD-ROM planet, the first thing one notices by mouse clicking along and looking around, is the tactile sense of three-dimensional space enriched with deep detail of light and shadow. Further, CD-quality digital sound supplies constant music and/or sound effects and the voices of aliens, robots and other humans — when one's character can locate humans — are clear and direct. Indeed, to really enjoy all the environmental escapades of *Spaceship Warlock*, one needs to have the fearlessness of a junkyard scavenger and the nosiness of a landlady. Only the player that follows that music coming from around the corner will be tempted to enter that bar to see the exotic (assuming one has a taste for salamanders) dancer and nip a glass of fuel. Indeed, only the player whose character is courageous enough to thwart a green mugger will get enough

An Interactive Movie on CD-ROM for the Macintosh II Computer
SPACESHIP WARLOCK™
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HAMMER STELLA STARBIRD YOU
?

credit to feed the vidphone and, consequently, book passage on the Spaceliner Belshazzar.

Boarded on the Belshazzar

Once the protagonist catches that air taxi to the spaceport, the Pogo shuttle ferries him (the game assumes one is male) to the liner. It is in beautifully animated sequences like this that one can sit back, hold tight and let the action hurl matters along. Aboard the sumptuous Belshazzar, the good guy gets to meet Captain Starbird and his curvumpteous daughter Stella. Of course, such an erotic (er, exotic) adventure was too sweet to last, so the alarms sound and the dark hull of the Warlock fills the viewport. After a ripping space battle, Starbird and Stella are sealed in the Warlock's brig, and the pirate Captain Hammer gives the player's character a "choice" to join the (very) motley crew. Fortunately, Hammer is a Terran freedom fighter, sworn to quell the Kroll and reclaim the lost Earth, so one cannot help but enlist in the cause.

Crushing the Kroll

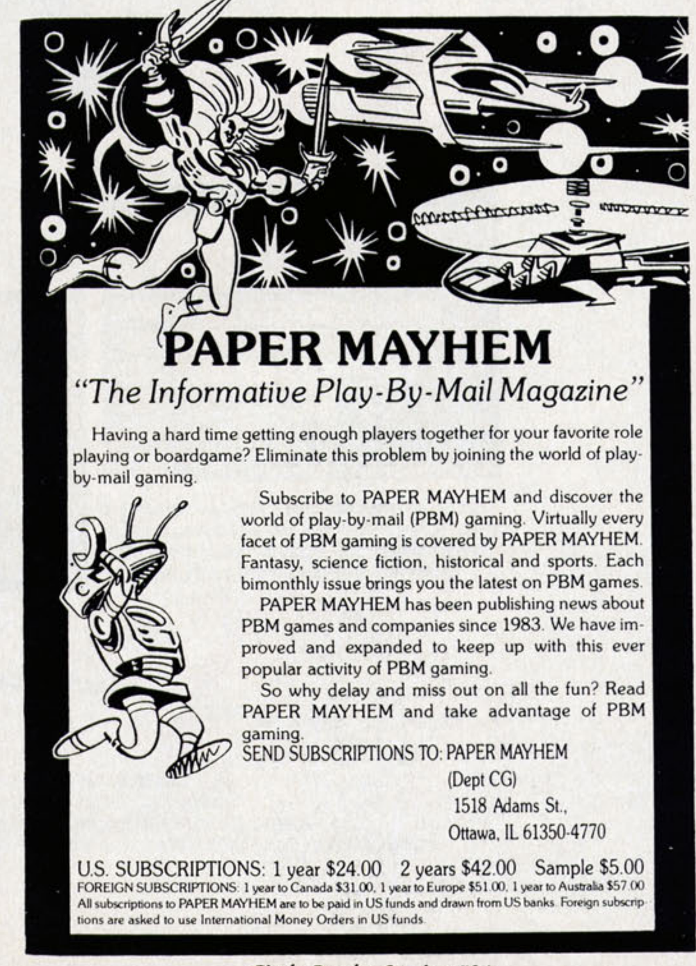
The decks of the Warlock are

connected by elevators and map-viewers are provided at intervals along the corridors to help players determine their exact locale. Players will need the special map that accompanies the maze on the engineering deck, but it will test one's problem-solving skill to determine what tools will be needed to fulfill your mission. Further, it is the protagonist's task to mount the gun turret, fight a Kroll ship to a standstill, enter the ship, use the blaster against the Kroll crew and return with more brains than he started with. It will also be bumpy going when Hammer sends him, *sans* map, deep into the gnarly Kroll asteroid to capture the goggly goods and, to man the guns yet again when the merciless Kroll patrol fleet dares to stand between the Warlock and the long lost home planet, Earth. Remember, home is where the *heart* is.

Night of the Living Watch Cursor

One predominant visual in *Warlock* is the watch cursor. With rich graphic data files like this on CD-ROM, it takes time to load up each next file. Another characteristic that can diminish the sense of reality is that the combat interface tends to cause objects to flash in a color-negative type of reversal. The weakest function in *Warlock* is the combat interface. It is a spongy, wobbly, "fuzzy logic" kind of aiming and firing control that tends to frustrate experienced gamers who are aware of better systems.

The good news is that players who own Macromind Director, the animation program that *Spaceship Warlock* was authored in, can access the clips in the Data Files folder, where many — but by no means all — of the scenes and characters can be viewed and played. For one's personal experiments (only!), it is possible to copy objects and actions to merge into custom micromovies. Reactor, the Chicago-based team of Mike Saenz and Joe Sparks, created most of the imagery, sound, music and voice themselves. Saenz and Sparks are, at this moment, slaving away to complete their next interactive optical opus, *Screaming Metal*. Their team has developed their own animation engine that leapfrogs Macromedia Director, and even Apple's QuickTime. Hopefully, that should melt the watch cursor like the dial in a painting by Dali. If *Metal* has even a parsec of the craftsmanship, beauty, bounce, humor and wonder of *Warlock*, it will indeed perpetuate the growth of this new genre of personal interactive gaming — the CD-ROM movie. CGW



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Golf Game Handicap.



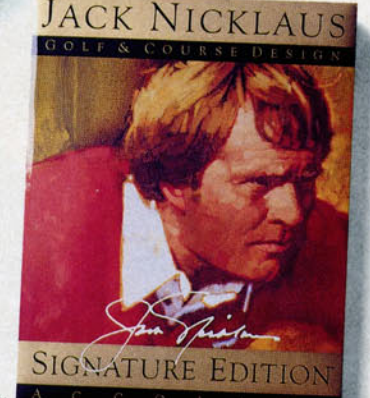
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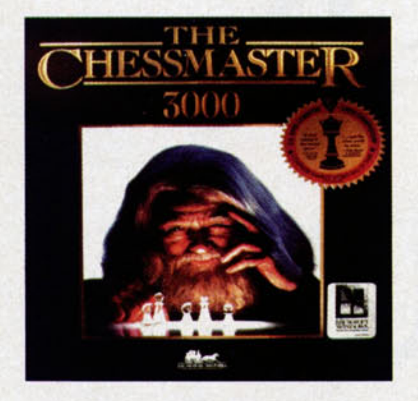
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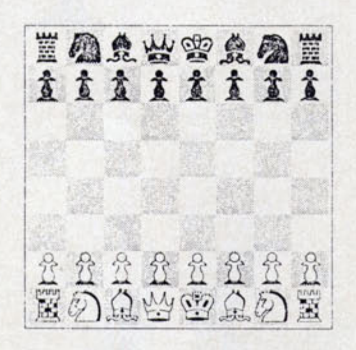
Knight Stalker



Software Toolworks' Chessmaster 3000

By Tim Carter

TITLE: Chessmaster 3000
SYSTEM: IBM
PLAYERS: 0-2
PRICE: $49.95
PROTECTION: None
PUBLISHER: Software Toolworks Novato, CA



Considering the success of previous *Chessmaster* programs, along with the rather fixed nature of the game of chess itself, one must ask how long **Software Toolworks**, or any other publisher for that matter, can continue to expect consumers to spend hard-earned dough upgrading their chess programs. The question really is how much can **Software Toolworks** add to previous *Chessmasters* to make the purchase of an upgrade worthwhile? The answer for this incarnation of *Chessmaster* is — a lot.

The Usual Suspects

As one might expect, many of the core features of the *Chessmaster* system have been upgraded to current standards. The graphics are sharp and smooth, and sound support is offered through *Soundblaster* and *Ad Lib* cards. There are the usual 2-D and 3-D displays, as well as some creative icons for those bored with the more traditional chess pieces. The documentation is complete, if somewhat cryptic. The user interface supports joystick, mouse and keyboard applications. Of course, none of this is new to either the user of *Chessmaster* or gamer who plays any other computer chess system.

What's New?

In going beyond what is already out there, **Software Toolworks** has added a number of options that make *Chessmaster 3000* a truly impressive sequel. One departure from traditional chess programs is in the way computer opponents are presented. *Chessmaster 3000* moves away from a strictly hierarchical series of difficulty levels and, instead, presents a number of distinct computer personalities. The inherent skill of these opponents ranges from very simple (Novice) to very difficult (Chessmaster). Between these extremes are fourteen personalities which have no obvious ranking. Some are modeled after great chess players of historical significance while others reflect a particular style of play. The skill of each personality is controlled by setting the amount of time that the computer has to think, as well as the number of moves that it attempts to plot out. Therefore, any of the personalities can be adjusted to meet the level of the human player without altering their "personality."

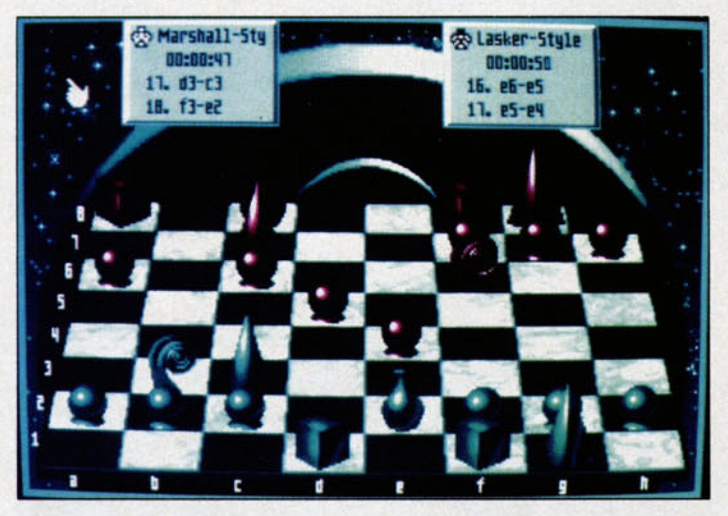


The addition of personality to computer opponents makes the game more enjoyable in both the short and long terms. In the long term, the ability to play repeatedly without encountering a similar strategy time and time again gives *Chessmaster 3000* real durability in terms of keeping one's attention. In the short term, playing against distinct personalities is simply more entertaining. (Although it is definitely a greater blow to one's ego to lose to an opponent

named "Woodpusher" than to be defeated by one with the pseudonym of "Chessmaster.")

It is also possible to create new computer personalities from scratch. Players have the opportunity to set seven characteristics that determine how the opponent will play. For example, one can determine an opponent's: aggressiveness, knowledge of opening moves and ability to see and construct a series of moves. An opponent can also be directed to favor certain pieces over others or to favor positional advantages over the taking of pieces.

While some players may be initially thrown off by the lack of an



obvious set of difficulty levels, the depth and strength of the system will become clear once the computer personalities and the opponent creation option are fully explored.

A Chess Program With Class

One of the real strengths of *Chessmaster 3000* is its utility as a learning program. Before playing, one can call up both introductory and advanced strategy tutorials, as well as a database of over 100 openings. This is an excellent way to introduce new players to the game using a hands on approach. New players will want to be familiar with the system of notation in use before attempting to use the tutorials.

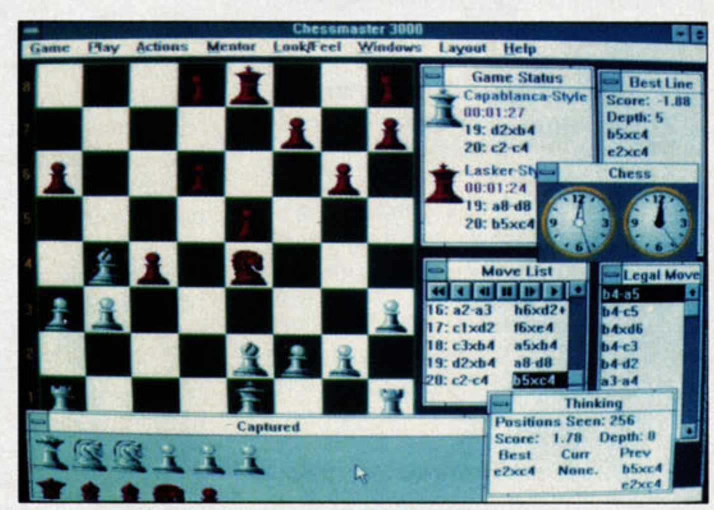
In addition, *Chessmaster* comes with 150 classic matches on file. As in previous versions of *Chessmaster*, the documentation includes a brief background on each match. Now, however, there is also a series of notes written into the database which provides observers with periodic updates on the strategies being employed.

One great improvement over older chess programs is the addition of plain language in all aspects of communication between the player and the *Chessmaster*. While chess notation is still used (and a choice of five styles of notation is provided), the people at **Software Toolworks** seem to have made a concerted effort to explain as much as possible in user-friendly language (i.e. plain English).

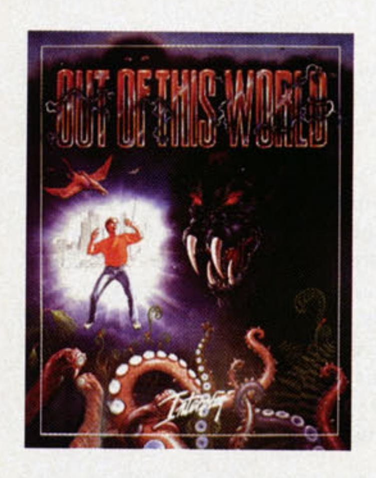
During a game, a variety of different options are available to both assist play and further improve one's playing skills. At any given point *Chessmaster* can analyze positions, provide a series of advised moves and explain in plain language why a certain move is a sound course of action. Early in the game, this advice revolves around a standard opening and possible variants. However, once in the middle of the game, this analysis is based on the computer's logic alone. *Chessmaster* will also analyze moves already made for strengths and possible weaknesses.

The on-line advice does have some weaknesses, however. Since one of the keys to game play is the inclusion of such a vast array of distinctive personalities for the computer opponents, it would be nice if the advice reflected this, as well. As it is, the advice provided is fairly inflexible in its strategy, almost invariably suggesting a series of one-for-one trade-offs to gain a positional advantage. As one might expect, this is of more use against some opponents than others.

Checkmate in Three



In conclusion, *Chessmaster 3000* is a most impressive upgrade of a generally sound chess system. The addition of plain language, both for notation and on-line advice, marks a significant step towards a completely accessible chess program. The emphasis on learning is also well done. One can only hope that future versions will meet the high standards of *Chessmaster 3000.* CGW



TITLE: Out of This World
SYSTEMS: Amiga, IBM
REVIEWED ON: Amiga
PRICE: $59.95
PROTECTION: Code Wheel
PRODUCER: Delphine Software
DISTRIBUTOR: Interplay Productions
Santa Ana, CA

John Carter of Interplay

Out of this World *Beats the Pulp out of a Genre*

by Allen Greenberg

In the latter half of the previous century, as well as the early part of this one, the wisest and most perceptive visionaries probed the depths of the unknown and used their prescience to herald the future in such a way that it lifted our sights toward the new frontiers of both inner and outer space. Nothing was hidden from them as they chronicled the unprecedented experiments which were carried out in the secluded facilities of mad, modern geniuses. Such inspired scribes of Earth's potential achievements were given only the finest of parchment on which to set their prophetic visions. It was called "pulp." Is it any fault of Jules Verne that the United States has invested billions in a space program when all that was actually necessary to reach the moon was a 900 foot cannon? Has not Edgar Rice Burroughs already introduced us to both the giants and the royalty living on Mars, as well as demonstrating an amazingly economical way of journeying there without so much as an airplane? It is with great pleasure, therefore, that we have come upon an interactive computer program whose authors have clearly paid attention to these sages of pulp. *Out of this World* (OOTW) properly depicts science in its "purest" form, complete with reclusive scientist, freak accident, strange creatures and, of course, another world (indeed, the European version of the game was entitled, *Another World*).

OOTW is an elegantly crafted arcade game, presented in a modern adventure game format. Less intense than most arcade games, it contains a gratifying degree of non-verbal puzzle-solving along with its share of running, jumping and wanton demolition. Although most of the game is played using a flat, two-dimensional point of view, the designers have liberally embellished the action with quick shifts in perspective so that the player is treated to a truly cinematic (or at least worthy of prime-time television) performance. Creatures seen from a non-threatening side view suddenly appear in a full, D.W. Griffith-style close-up. Imaginative, off-angle views are also used on occasion to depict special sequences. The action clearly follows a pre-set script rather than the endless wave-after-wave scenario used in standard arcade exercises. Whether this is, in fact, an adventure game in arcade format, rather than the other way around, is truly a philosophical question best left to minds who are paid less-per-word than this reviewer.

OOTW depicts the adventures of a scientist chosen by fate to be hurled from his laboratory into some other universe. The events which lead up to this occurrence are depicted in the program's introduction — arguably, one of the most imaginative pieces of non-interactive story-telling ever associated with a computer game. The world on which the scientist finds himself, clearly inspired by the much-loved pulp worlds of the aforementioned Edgar Rice Burroughs, is ruled by a race of despotic slave-keepers. Assuming the scientist survives long enough to be captured by the fiends, he (after all, "pulp" is notoriously sexist) must then navigate his way to freedom. Most of the action involves navigating the labyrinth which surrounds the alien prison while dealing with the guards and creatures who populate it. Of special interest is a likable fellow prisoner who quickly becomes a loyal companion. There is also an interesting multi-purpose zap-gun which functions as a type of alien Swiss Army knife. Unfortunately, the Amiga version of the game ends very abruptly and many players will feel short-changed with the final scene. Fortunately, the IBM version contains additional "footage," about an hour or two worth for most players.

At times, OOTW reflects the formula of the *Dragon's Lair* series of games. In response to some surprise event, the scientist must make a sudden, yet carefully, timed decision in order to preserve his life. At other times, the player is allowed a more free-form style of combat during which timing is less important than maintaining a constant barrage of fire in the face of the enemy. The zap-gun is capable of three different functions and these must be applied with a modicum of strategy in order to be successful. On the Amiga, all of the game's input and control is via the joystick and there is no option to use any other device such as the mouse or the keyboard. Fortunately, the IBM version offers additional controls. Often, the results of a movement command are dependent on the hero's circumstances and this is left for the player to discover by trial, error and death.



OOTW, like most arcade-style games, does not allow a game to be saved in progress. While this is *de rigueur* for the action gamer, it may come as a shock to the adventure gamer who attempts to cross over into this hybrid. Instead, the player is given a four-letter code at any time his





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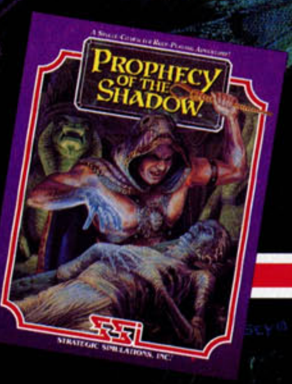
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adventure gamer who attempts to cross over into this hybrid. Instead, the player is given a four-letter code at any time his character is killed. The entire game is divided into several segments, each of which is associated with one of the codes. So, at the time of death, the player is given the option of resuming the game at the beginning of the current segment, rather than being forced to return to the opening of the entire adventure. The player may also enter the code sequence to immediately return to that segment the next time the game is booted up. This works well only as long as the trouble spot, the spot which caused the player to die, takes place relatively close to the beginning of the segment. Although far better than being forced to repeat the entire game, it may still prove a frustrating experience to continuously repeat a segment — which may contain several difficult maneuvers — until it is completed. The system would have been more useful, and less repetitious, had the game been divided into smaller, more numerous, segments. The alternative, of course would have been to allow games to be saved at any point and written to disk in the traditional manner.

In their most successful adventure game to date, *Future Wars*, **Delphine** proved their talent for generating superior sounds and graphics. In OOTW, the programming team has again come up with some impressive material. Polygonal graphics have never been put to better use, while the sound effects on the Amiga play "can you top this" with the pictures they embellish. With its artistic perspectives and seamlessly-smooth animation, OOTW makes for a presentation which will be difficult to surpass.

In what appears to be an effort on the part of **Interplay** and **Delphine** to avoid confusing their customers with excess verbiage, the amount of documentation for OOTW has been reduced to a mere fraction of what appears on their warranty information card. Although the sincerity of this effort should not go unacknowledged, there are still areas of information which deserved better coverage. The fact that the joystick serves more than just the standard "run, jump and shoot" functions is nowhere mentioned in this brief pamphlet. Similarly, novice players will likely be confused by the lack of information on how to use the copy-protection code wheel. Unfortunately, the code-wheel (known "affectionately" by many players as the code-wheel from hell) seems to have used more ink than the manual itself. Although experienced players should have little trouble using this product, why discourage first-time players? If nothing else, an increase in the volume of instructions will make the warranty appear less complicated.

Brevity, in many parts of the world, may be a virtue. OOTW could easily have avoided that particular virtue, however, and benefited from several extra disks worth of game-play. What **Delphine** has given us, however, is certainly an estimable piece of work. Thousands of arcade games have been imported from Europe, most of which defy successful completion by anyone who was not born on Krypton. Perhaps it's just another of Murphy's "laws" that one of Europe's most playable and enjoyable arcade efforts must also be the one which ends, at least on the Amiga, in the shortest amount of time. For the sake of "science," we can only hope there will be more. CGW



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Designing People...

Part II of CGW's Coverage of the Sixth Annual Computer Game Developers Conference

One of the most fascinating aspects of rubbing shoulders with the seminal minds in the entertainment software industry is discovering just how much most of these designers care about their products. For most, game design is a passionate business; while, admittedly, for others it is simply a less-structured way of making money via computer programming. These highlights are designed to share the pinnacles of that passion.

Sports Games (Don Daglow, *Tony La Russa Ultimate Baseball)*

Don Daglow is passionate about baseball. After long hours of number-crunching at his **Beyond Software** development house, he goes home to play with baseball statistics. He is actively involved with SABRE, the world's foremost group of statistics-based enthusiasts for the national game, and was the primary producer on the original *Earl Weaver Baseball*, as well as the primary impetus behind *Tony La Russa Ultimate Baseball*. He believes that it is a requirement for successful designers of sports games (in particular) to be immersed in the sport. His reasoning is that *people* care about sports. One can walk into any sports bar in the country and start an argument over the identifity of the greatest pure hitter of all time, the best running back ever, NHL television contracts, players overlooked in the all-star voting of any league or the relative qualifications of any coach/manager in any league.

Such interest/passion is a two-edged sword, according to Daglow, because there is a pre-sold element to sports games and a continual seasonal cycle that renews interest, but there are also *a priori* (before one ever experiences the product) expectations about what a sports game is going to be like. Those who care more about "real-world" performances are going to be disappointed in games that abstract statistics and leave out certain utilities, while those who are more concerned about simulated action in a given sport are going to be disappointed if they are reduced to a coaching/managing role. Hence, in sports games in particular, a designer must be aware of what he/she is trying to accomplish.

Daglow presented five factors for design decisions.

- Target Audience
- Data Intensity vs Interface Intensity
- Simulation vs Action
- Focus
- Control

Targeting one's audience breaks quickly into an age category. Children are much more interested in the action to be found in a particular sport than they are in recreating full seasons, managing their favorite players and forming leagues. In general (at least, in the past), this has defined a large part of the differences between cartridge-based and disk-based sports games. The disk-based games, with superior storage capacity, were more ideal for number-crunching, season replays and individual leagues, while the cartridge games offered interface advantages (standardization, no installs and fast access) and provided an ideal arena for playing individual games. On-screen players tended to be bigger on the cartridge games because the emphasis was on individual action, while the players tended to be presented in smaller versions on computer monitors in order to offer more of the feel of team play on a large playing field. Such considerations have changed due to a confluence of design, but it is still important to target one's audience.

The second factor, data intensity versus interface intensity, follows immediately on the heels of the target audience. If one is simply trying to present a vicarious sense of participating in the football plays being run on a computer monitor, for example, it is certainly more important to design an interface where the player can have visual cues to receive the handoff, anticipate a blocker to follow and select a hole to dash through than it is significant to purchase and input the actual statistics of the second-string running back of the last place team in an actual league. For those of us who want to coach *real* players or identify with such as we try to perform their on-field feats of prowess, however, it is more important to feel like those are authentic stars on the screen, not lame imposters bound by our own less-than-superstar coordination. For the latter, it may be more important to show a wider angle view of the play and have less-specific action points. Rather than taking a handoff, for instance, it might be enough to let the player select a hole and determine when to zig-zag across the playing field according to the flow of the play. Also, the data intensive gamer is going to want more plays to call and the ability to design custom plays, while the interface intensive gamer simply wants quick and easy access to a reasonable assortment of plays.

The designer of a simulation, to examine the third factor, is much more likely to consider the physics of a sport than the designer of a pure action game. The latter simply presents the perception of the action. The former is concerned with the realistic nature of the action. The action designer wants to make sure that the gamer feels like he/she is in the midst of the play. The simulation designer is concerned that the gamer feel involved in a play that is unfolding realistically.

The fourth design issue, which will depend on one's answer to the first three, is the question of focus. This is, of course, the age-old question of exactly what is shown on the screen. Would it be a cockpit view in a hydroplane simulation or an overhead view? Would there be multiple camera angles or would the visual presentation be strictly first-person? Just as a filmmaker knows at all times what the viewer should be seeing, so should the game designer.

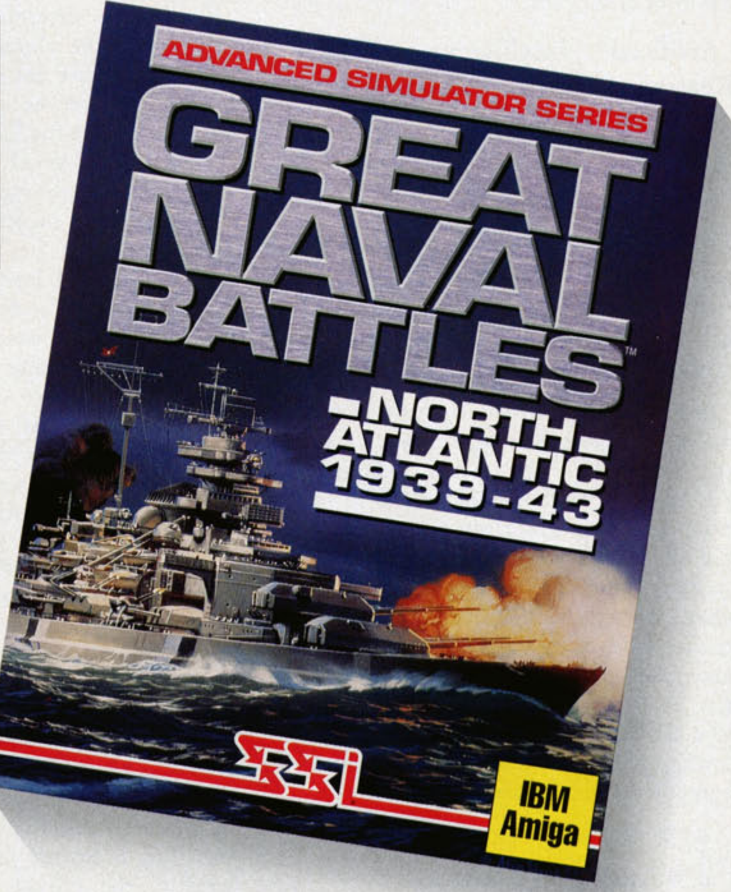
Finally, the sports game designer must be concerned with the issue of control. How much control will the gamer have over play design, playbook, play selection, roster, line-up, substitutions and formations? Should there be a certain number

(text continues on page 54.)

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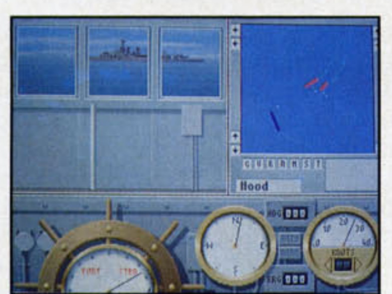
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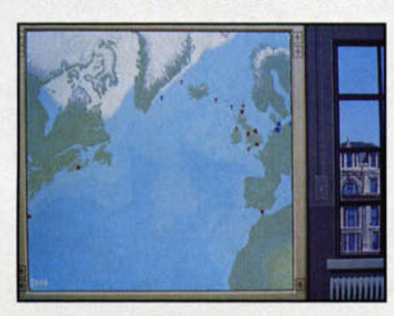
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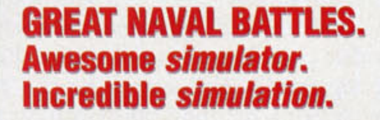


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of pre-set plays? Should the gamer be able to modify them? Should the gamer be able to control one player or more? All are questions that will have bearing on the final form of the design.

Artificial Intelligence (Roger Keating, *Carriers at War*)

Too often, Roger Keating pointed out, the so-called artificial intelligence (AI) is tacked on at the conclusion of a project rather than carefully integrated from the beginning. Since most computer gamers purchase these games in order to have a challenging computer opponent at their convenience, such lack of design integration is something akin to criminal neglect.

In speaking of the development of computer opponents, Keating offered a caveat that such "AI" is not what is traditionally meant by the textbook approaches to artificial intelligence. In a game environment, the computer AI must be built from scratch, since the computer opponent does not have the life memories and experiences to draw upon in decision-making and inferential learning. Keating stated that every single moment is "brand new" to a computer. Hence, he offered the following guidelines in developing "AI" for computer game opponents:

- The data base
- The mechanical utilities and
- Establishing the decision process.

First of all, Keating suggested that game designers should consider the structure of the database for the game from the perspective of how it will be accessed by the AI. The designer should determine what is going to be in the data base, what the usefulness of that data is (to both the human and artificial opponent) and where the data plugs into the game design. Keating suggested a grid system for the data base as being the most efficient means of structuring the information required to undergird the game.

After developing the data structure, Keating stated that the designer should develop mechanical utilities which govern the way data is funneled to both the computer and human player. Keating insisted that these information flow utilities must be designed so that both the computer and human player share the same limited intelligence. Otherwise, the computer is apt to cheat. Obviously, some computer opponents do have access to more information than the human player, but Keating suggested that this is sloppy design.

Finally, after determining the data to be delivered to the players (and to the algorithms that drive the program itself), one is ready to write the so-called "AI." Keating warned against having the computer opponent hard-wired to react the same way to the same formation, thrust or tactic. Rather, he suggested that the computer be given a "set" of options derived from the limited intelligence, then allow the computer to make random decisions of simple choices based on these sets. In such a way, Keating believes, computer opponents will seem more intelligent and less predictable. At the very least, the computer opponent should not be easily tricked in the same way (as in the famous northern feint tactic for *War in Russia*).

Project Management and Financial Analysis (Ivan Manley, *The Third Courier*)

Ivan Manley is the president of Manley **& Associates, Inc.**, an aggressive development house in Issaquah, Washington. Ivan and his wife, Carol, have worked on original projects and conversions for nearly every major publisher in the industry. Ivan presented facts and figures related to the project management for a computer game. Manley is uniquely qualified to present such a project paradigm because his pre-computer game industry background was in project management and financial analysis at **Boeing Computer Services** for 17 years. Since many CGW readers are curious as to how an actual computer game is developed, here is a sample project plan from Manley & Associates.

Play Balancing (Eric Goldberg, *The Next President* on Prodigy, and Dan Bunten, *Global Conquest*)

This dual presentation asked the question as to whether play balancing is a necessary part of design or not. Eric Goldberg, whose experience comes largely out of the boardgame arena prior to his recent designs for the **Prodigy Interactive Network**, took the position that game designers do not really balance play. Instead, he suggested that the important activity for a designer is to concentrate on the perception of play balance.

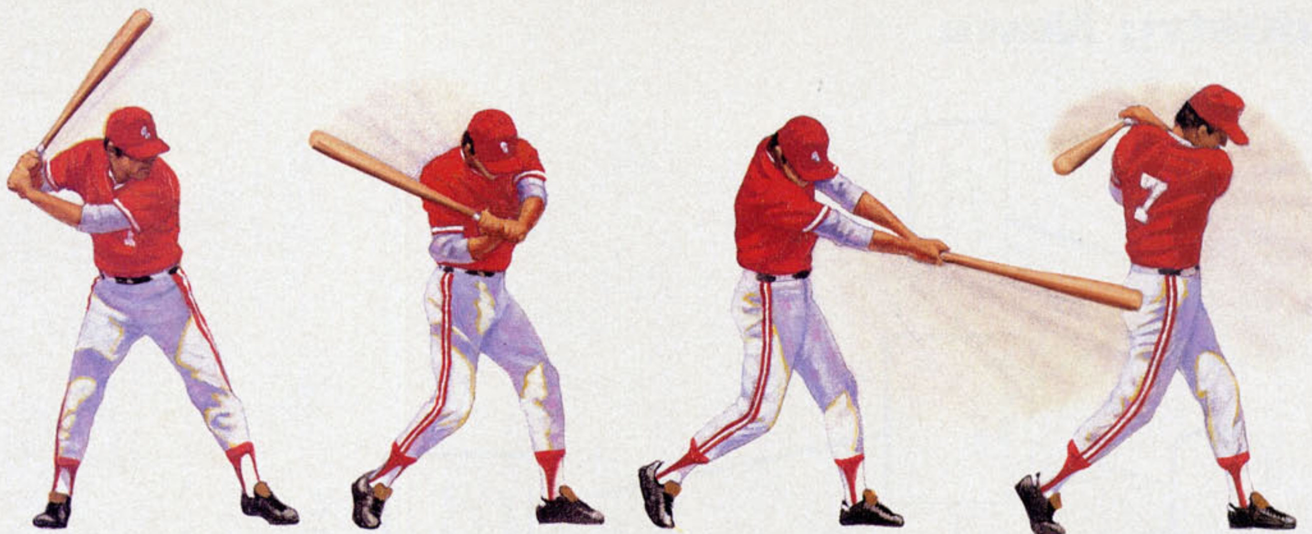
Goldberg based his position on the boardgame proposition that play balancing is guaranteeing that both sides (or all sides) have an equal opportunity of winning the game. Thus, he argued that computer games do not have genuine play balance because the computer opponent does not generally have an equal opportunity of winning against the human player. After all, the human player is the customer, so why would a designer create a game where the computer opponent won regularly (unless said designer was masochistic)?

He admitted that human players often perceive the games as balanced, but noted several adjustments in the human player's favor. In arcade games, for example, the human has three or more lives against the many screens of enemies. In other games, there are save positions where the player can "over-balance" against their environment by ensuring a reset if one strategy happens to misfire. There is no such risk management in a live multi-player game (nor in real life).

In strategy games, some play-balancing occurs via victory conditions. If one player (whether human or computer) starts out in a fairly untenable position, the victory conditions can be adjusted so that the disadvantaged player wins if the dominant player doesn't conquer him/her until a certain time (or date) within the game's fiction. If one player begins with significantly more resources in an economic strategy game, it may be that the player with the most percentage growth wins.

In other games, "real-life" balance issues exist. When Goldberg was designing *The Next President*, he had to make sure that any player from any given part of the country would feel that they had equal influence on the game's resolution. So, the design built in a geographical parity that does not actually exist in real presidential elections. His guideline was for designers to decide on the "feel" for a given game and adjust the balance to the right detail level.

Goldberg ruffled plenty of feathers, however, when he contended that a CRPG does not need play balancing any-



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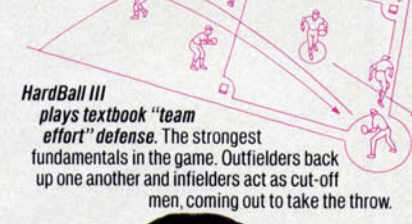
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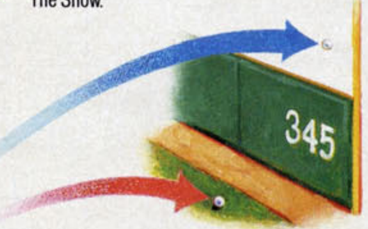
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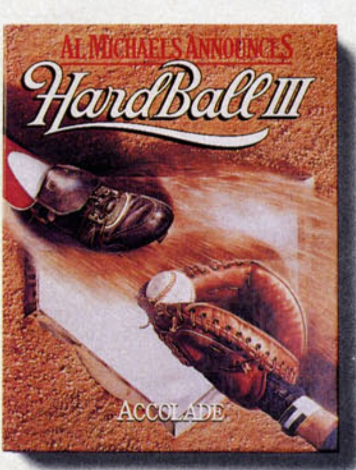
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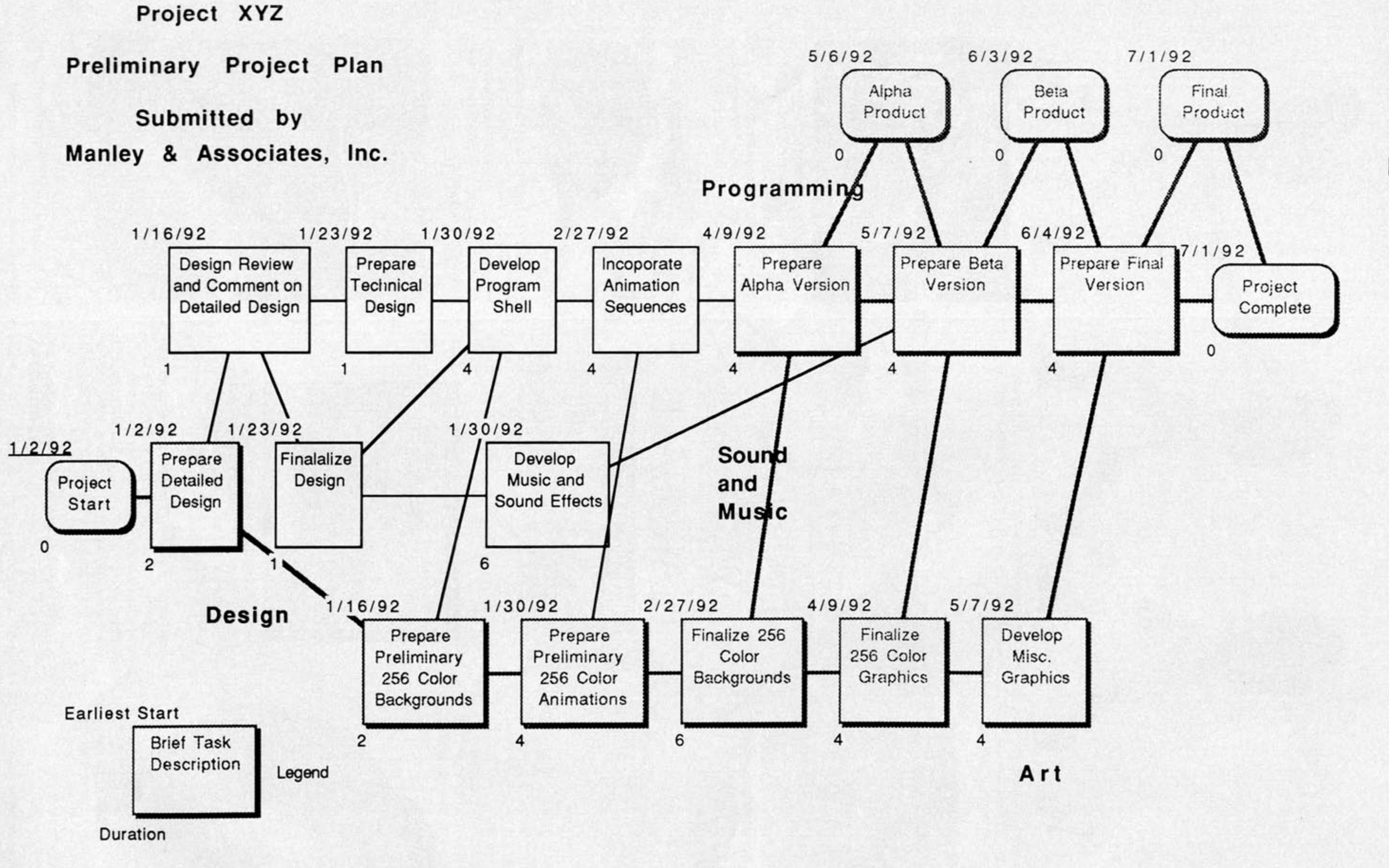
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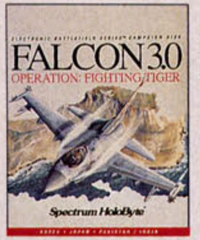
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1/23/92
Finalalize Design
1
1/23/92
Prepare Techinical Design
1
1/30/92
Develop Program Shell
4
2/27/92
Incoporate Animation Sequences
4
4/9/92
Prepare Alpha Version
4
5/7/92
Prepare Beta Version
4
6/4/92
Prepare Final Version
4
7/1/92
Project Complete
0
5/6/92
Alpha Product
0
6/3/92
Beta Product
0
7/1/92
Final Product
0
1/30/92
Develop Music and Sound Effects
6
1/16/92
Prepare Preliminary 256 Color Backgrounds
2
1/30/92
Prepare Preliminary 256 Color Animations
4
2/27/92
Finalize 256 Color Backgrounds
6
4/9/92
Finalize 256 Color Graphics
4
5/7/92
Develop Misc. Graphics
4
Earliest Start
Brief Task Description
Legend
Duration

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more than a software toy or a pinball game. Several designers in the audience contended with him on this point and *CGW*'s editorial staff certainly disagrees. In CRPGs, the game design must be such that the possibility of winning or losing adjusts to the player characters as they improve. If sections of the game are too far out of balance, the game is frustrating rather than fun. Even in CRPGs, the monsters and NPC villains need to have, at least, an *almost* equal chance to win and the players need that very real possibility of losing.

With regard to pinball games in particular, one member of the crowd insisted that there had to be a proper balance between "rescuing" the ball when it threatened to roll out of play and "losing" the ball. Anyone who has ever played a worn-out pinball game in the arcades, with a center groove where the ball invariably dropped between the flippers, would have to agree that they are not going to play any pinball games where the play balance is off. Indeed, who would play *SimCity* if they felt that the entropy kicked in too fast and unrealistically or if the disasters kept coming in ever faster sequence such that they never had a chance to rebuild? Indeed, one of the greatest criticisms against *SimEarth* is that the Gaia features (except on the most difficult level) tend to correct many of the player's mistakes without the player being able to see the correction occurring.

Dan Bunten had a different perspective on play balance. Since Dan designs multi-player games, play balance is particularly important. He began his discussion with a plea for multiple-channels for input. Some gamers prefer one style of input while others prefer another. In multi-player games, in particular, it is vital that the mouse user not have any advantage over the joystick user nor keyboard user over the mouse user. From interface considerations through game mechanics, successful designers of multi-player games need to consider balance.

In revealing some of his methodology for play balancing, Dan admitted that there were some "quick and dirty" means of play-balancing games. Asked how he balances his games, he opted for a one word answer, "Cheat." Asked how he would defend that practice if a gamer caught him, he said, "Lie!" in a folksy rhythm of misdirection. Then, he went on to reveal some of his actual methods. For example, in *M.U.L.E.* and *Global Conquest*, there are random events which can affect the flow of play. The programs are constructed, however, so that players in the lead can never have good luck and the trailing players can never have bad luck. Only for the players in the middle are the events truly random. Another "quick and dirty" means of play balancing is to use age handicapping. Naturally, the style of game will affect which way the handicapping swings (i.e. younger players might have an advantage in a game requiring dexterity where older players might have an advantage in a game which relied on life experience or a strategic storehouse of knowledge).

Whatever one does in terms of play balancing, *playtesting* is the "forge" of balance. It is, according to Bunten, absolutely vital. Dan revealed that he uses the critics of his last game as part of the core of his playtest group for the next game. Further, he suggested using playtesters that fit the target market as one gears toward releasing the next game.

Lessons from *Patton Strikes Back* (Chris Crawford)

Without Chris Crawford's original vision, the CGDC probably would not exist. So, it is particularly appropriate to close this two part report with a few thoughts from Chris about his latest design. Chris suggested three basic approaches to designers that should work for any game.

First, the project should begin with a clear mission statement (high concept). If the designer can state in a few simple words what he/she is trying to do, it will save a lot of time in both selling the design and making the plethora of design decisions down the road. The high concept keeps projects on the right track and enables marketing departments to pitch the product to the right people, later on.

Second, the game's programming team should begin by writing "goodie two-shoes" code. Careful, clear and commented code at the beginning will save a multitude of hours during the "crunch time" toward the end of the project when one must put a "hack" here and a "hack" there in order to make that deadline. At least, those who start with "goodie two-shoes" code have a reasonable chance of knowing where those quick "hacks" need to go.

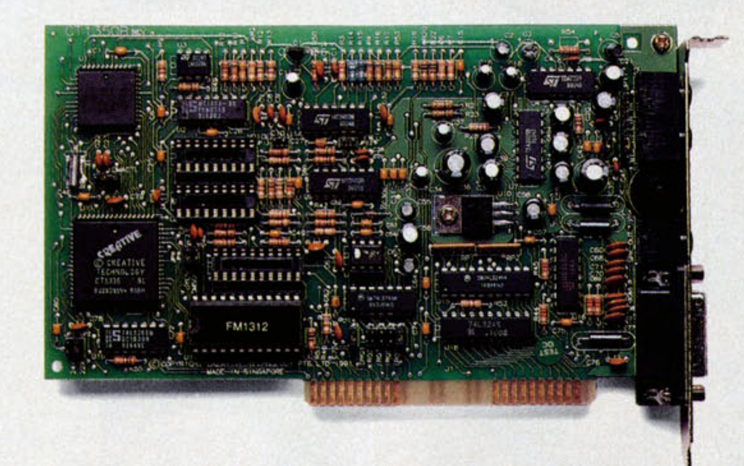
Third, he wisely encouraged the assembled designers to "bake the cake" first and then, make the "icing." If the designer or design team has a design that they are happy with, they can easily add-on the glitz to the marketing department's desire during the latter stages of the game. In this way, the game is more likely to be what the designer had in mind from the beginning and still leave the producers and product managers feeling good about having an impact on the project. The obvious cynicism aside, Chris did make a significant point. The glitz grabs a customer's attention, but it is the game that both holds that attention and causes the customer to recommend the program to someone else.

Do You Know the Way to San Jose?

The Computer Game Developers Conference has become an institution, but it is a maturing organization. This year's conference had the best program balance ever, in terms of subjects, feature tracks and variety of speakers. It was also the best-suited facility for the conference compared to the venues in the past. One thing is certain, the organizing committee does not intend to stand on their laurels (Be that Brenda Laurel's laurels or anyone else's) and next year's conference promises to be even better. CGW



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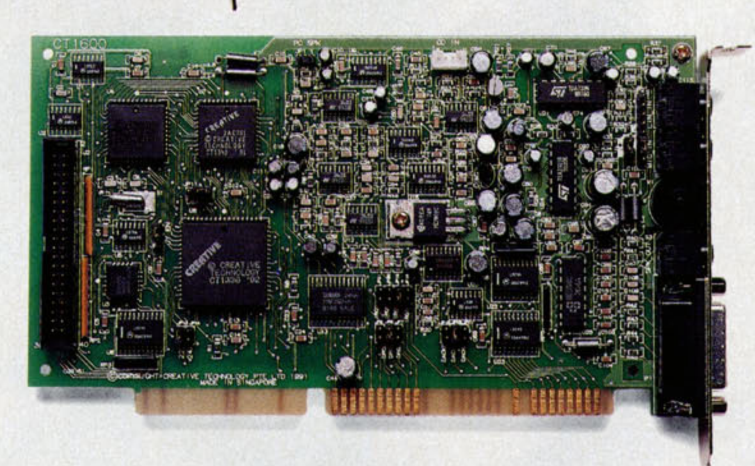


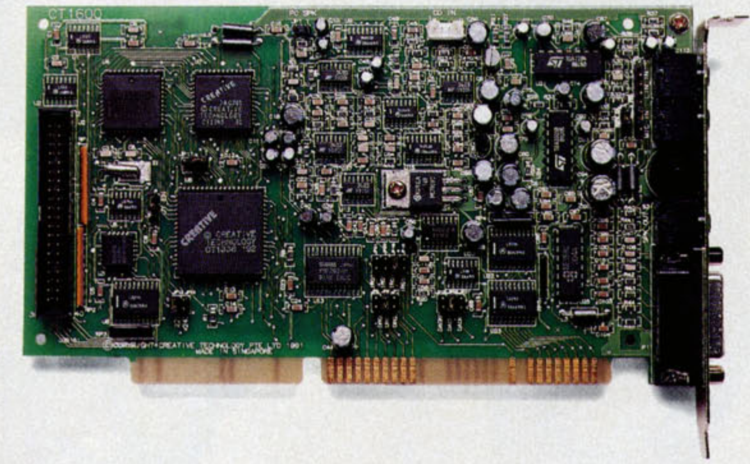
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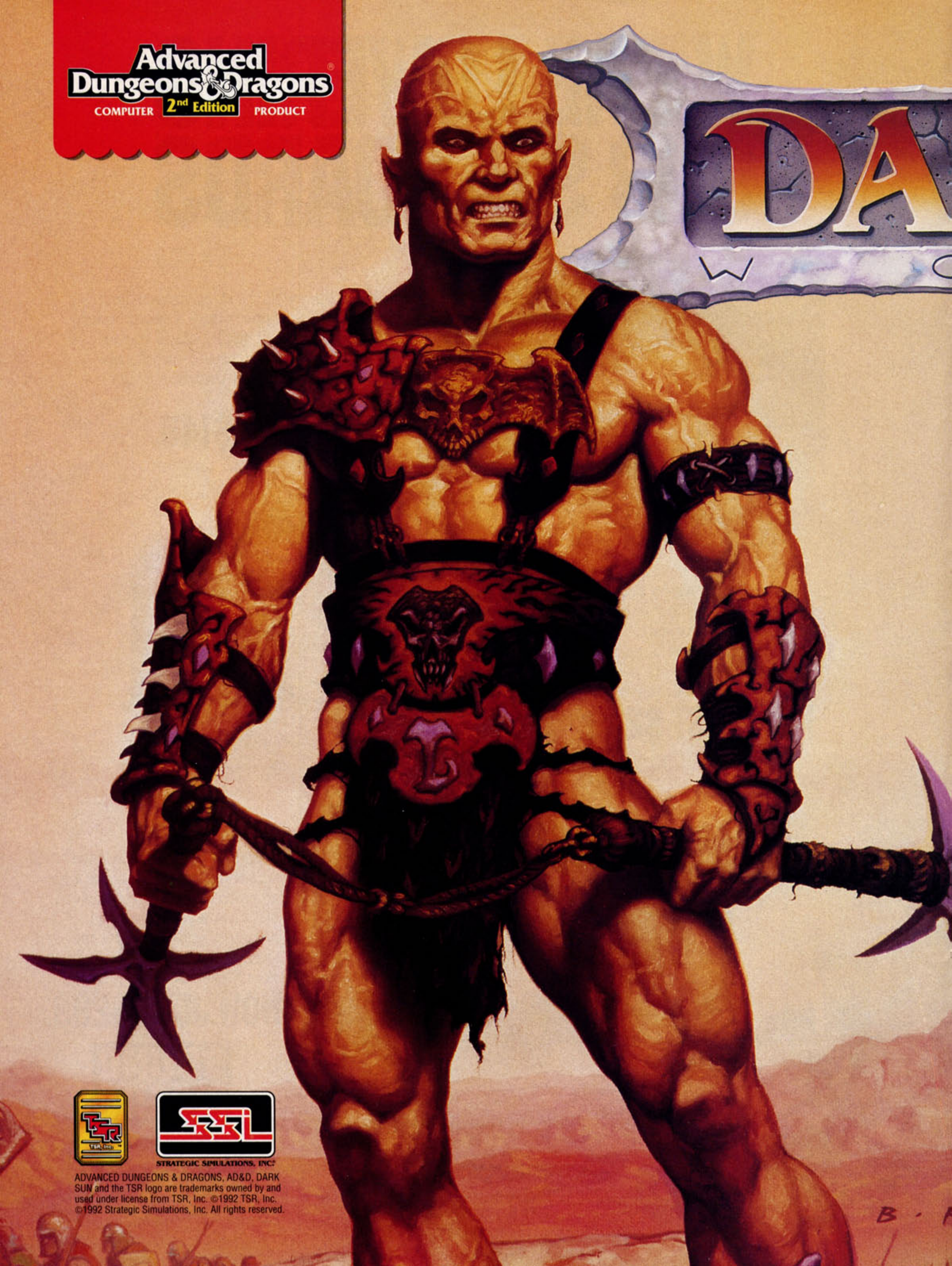
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Legends In Their Own Minds

Multiplayer Role-Playing in Cerebral-Space

by "Ranger" Chris Lombardi

WAR! The cries of messengers rose up from all quarters of the city. "Fayd is at war!" "The Broodlord Ti'viinar is gathering an army of men and beasts to bring against our walls!" Within minutes the streets of the town, from the Poor Quarter to Broadway, was a whorl of questioning words and speculation. "What was the cause of this outrage?" "How many men?" "Word has it that Ti'viinar has an army of Dragons." "When will they arrive?" The cackle was worse than a meeting of the town politique.

Ducking into the Physician's Guild (a popular place for adventurer gatherings) Ranger found that cooler, more informed heads were already discussing the issue and planning a defense. From the conflicting accounts and fantastic rumors that passed between the tired, bandaged bunch, a careful ear could gather this much: The Broodlord had once again become expansionistic and would move against Fayd with a horde of mercenary barbarians plus flocks of horrific Ravagers. By the best estimates, the people of Fayd could expect the invasion force in a week.

The townsfolk wasted no time hoarding supplies, sharpening their weapons and skills, and building ramparts on the city wall to aid in the defense. King Frederick held a war council in which Kylearan, Joqain, and Dagmar, warriors respected throughout the Realm, were chosen as the leaders of the defensive force. In a few days, all was ready. All that remained was the tedious task of warding off anxious energy while waiting for the first signs of advancing spears to crest over the horizon of the Wastelands.

Such was the setting for another wild night of multi-player role-playing on the **Digital Dreams Network**. *The Legends of Future Past*, as this game of telecommunicated fantasy is called, is a remarkably rich playground for modem-owning role-players from around the country.

As per the best traditions of the gaming genre, players act in this world through an alter-ego, created to suit the role one wishes to bring to the game. One is only limited by the race one chooses (there are eight) and the values of character attributes one "roles up." One then enters the community as a young, green adventurer who gains experience, advances levels, and acquires the skills to suit one's character ideal.

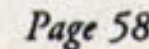
Players define their characters in two ways; functionally, through their collection of skills and historically, through the actions and relationships one establishes with other characters. The available skills include a wide range of possibilities (allowing for healers, woodspeople, magic users, warriors and such) and are designed such that they all have a *definite* function in the game's mechanics (unlike some systems which include functionally useless skills for the sake of fleshing out a thin skills list, or for further character definition.) Development of a character progresses without much restriction and one is free to mix and match skills to one's whim.

The background for the Legends universe is an amalgam of forms from fantasy literature and established role-playing systems. The universe is set in a post-Cataclysmic scenario in which an advanced civilization has met its end and, consequently, a new one has risen from its rubble. The mythic foreparents of the characters had advanced forms of technology which they've left in their self-destructive wake, opening up to players the realm of technology as well as the realm of magic. Thus, next to the usual cast of elves, dwarves, human, and drakin one may find mechanoids and others invoking the powers of arcane machinery.

The nexus of life in *Legends* is the burb of the introduction, Fayd. Fayd contains all the facilities one would expect of an adventurer's headquarters: armories, healers, bowyers, banks, inns, bars and the like. One will also find a tailor, a haberdashery, a lingerie shop, and even a liquor store — all of which serve to support a delightfully fertile role-playing environment. There are even romantic nooks, flower stands and wedding chapels opening the way to role-playing romance. The world itself is one of character and potential that continually opens up to the player over many sessions.

Textual Healing

Interaction with the world of *Legends* and with other players is handled entirely with text descriptions. Like text adventures of days passed, *Legends* relies on the player's imagination to create the images of the game environment,



drawing from the well of forms that make up the 'graphics' of the mental eye. Action involves typing short sentences, usually two or three words, and speech is simply a matter of typing the addressees' name and a message in quotes. One initially has the usual problems with the parser, which appears unforgiving until one learns its particular dialect, but it is better than most in that it understands partial spellings of names and commands ("Bod" is sufficient for "Bodhisatva") and has single letter equivalents for common commands ("k" for "kill", "l" for "look"). Of course, this facility for abbreviation didn't do Ranger any good during the aforementioned war when high level heroes began to attack the Ravagers using the "ra" abbreviation.

The text interface might turn away some, considering the level of graphic intensity most gamers now ask of their role-playing and graphic adventures, but my humble opinion finds the text interface preferable to any other alternatives. Though games of this sort have tried graphic front-ends, I think they actually detract from the experience. I have a hard time identifying with a little pixelated figure and no *cartoonish* interface could communicate the range of expression the "Legends" system implements textually. The range of gestural expression is very broad; from coughs, to winks, to frowns, groans, blinks, babbles, and cheers. I've collected a list of more than 50 with more yet to discover and more continually added at players' requests. Until that distant future when telepresence makes it possible for role-players to take tangible form in cyberspace, I'm more than happy to do my adventuring in cerebral-space via textual suggestions.

Keeping the Legend Alive

Though the game universe and interface is well developed, it is really the dedication and perspiration of the Game Masters that keeps the *Legends* realm an exciting and dynamic community. Nearly every night during prime usage hours, the GMs will put on an event of some sort. Often, these are mini-quests where the players must recover some item or overcome some violent threat. At other times, they are more involved. Once, the king of Fayd, King Frederick, invited the players to his castle for a feast during which there was a murder. The feast, then, turned into a Host-Your-Own-Mystery Party where a guest at the banquet was identified as the murderer and apprehended. The war described in the introduction was another, more involved scenario. (BTW, the forces of Fayd eventually defeated the Broodlord though the powers of evil went so far as to crash the system in a last, deperate grasp at victory.)

At other times, these events are less dramatic. Oracles have appeared offering wisdom to the worthy or interesting characters have shown up in the town square offering information and goods. *And*, in this realm as in our own sense of reality, these visiting deities and hawkers are not always on the up and up. The game masters have been known to 'have a little fun' with players. In fact, once my character fell most embarrassingly into the hands of a charlatan offering "Pyramid Power" through suspiciously shaped caps. The caps turned out to be as potent as those of the mid-70's fad and Ranger was out 25 hard-earned gold pieces.

Something is always going on in Fayd; whether it's the meeting of one of the many organizations in the realm (like the lawkeepers, foresters, thieves guild, or a religious/magic-using circle); contests in cartography; competitions in storytelling or a criminal trial for a character who has breached the bounds of the community's laws (which are few but swiftly enforced). All of this activity serves to flesh out the community that the players create amongst themselves and give them the impression of playing in a universe of constant motion.

In addition to the nightly mini-quests, every Saturday afternoon is host to a major quest, very much like traditional group dungeon adventures. The *Legends* game masters typically use these major quests to unveil new areas of the *Legends* game universe. Players will band together at the appropriate time and be sent on a mission to some previously unheard of area of the realm. These quest tend to be well designed, with dungeons filled with puzzles and riddles of an interesting variety. The quests tend to, naturally, bring out the best role-playing from the characters, but, as extra incentive, players are graded on their performance in three categories: puzzle solving, role-playing, and a combination score, with experience points awarded accordingly. The fantasy is reinforced through storywriting contests in which the account of a quest is documented and added to the history of The Realms which the player characters are continually creating.

The quests are generally a good time, though the text streams can get out of hand when ten or more people are involved. Anyone familiar with large group role-playing knows what its like when everyone simultaneously gives their opinion on the nature of the fuchsia liquid on the Altar of X. Put 15 chattering players in one room on-line and it can get a bit bewildering, especially for new players. Of course, these sorts of things are always a problem when doing *anything* with a large group of people. Fortunately, the players typically don't remain together in one group for the entire time, but tend to split off now and again as the scenario permits. Also, the game masters are, as of this writing, looking into ways to divide up groups during quests to eliminate some of the group adventure frustration.

It is just this dedication and responsiveness to players by the *Legends* group that makes this system one of the best available. Their love for their project and of the role-playing hobby seeps through at every point. Needless to say, it comes highly recommended from this gamer who has spent over 100 hours with it over the past two months. One caveat, however, *Legends of Future Past* is terribly addictive and is *not* cheap. At $6.00 an hour this is no casual hobby, but if multi-player role-playing is one's game, it is definitely time to don one's favorite alter-ego, check into the local adventurers guild and poke around. It just might be "The Realm" in which one's personal *Legends* are made. CGW

For more information about the Digital Dreams Network and its *Legends Of Future Past* live role-playing system, contact the game masters via modem at (800) 937-7644 or voice at (508) 757-5737. CGW

There's An Editor That Shapes Game's Ends

A Look at Domark's Virtual Reality Studio

by Charles A. Smith



TITLE: Virtual Reality Studio
SYSTEM: IBM
PRICE: $89.95
GRAPHICS: VGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy Graphics
SOUND: Ad Lib or PC speaker
PROTECTION: None
PUBLISHER: Domark
DISTRIBUTER: Accolade San Jose, CA

As one of the few computer programs which allows users to create their own 3D interactive environments, the misnamed *Virtual Reality Studio* is a baby step toward this technological future. Domark has taken the "Freescape 3D System" underlying such games as *Dark Eclipse* and *Darkside*, given it a high tech name (albeit an unfortunate and deliberate marketing misnomer) and a friendly user interface, and served it up to the public as a "virtual reality" construction set. In spite of the name, this product does not allow consumers to create total immersion experiences. It is a 3-D construction set, nothing more and nothing less.

The world is divided into areas which designate cubes of 8192 X 3 "units" or "steps." One can have up to 254 areas in a "custom" reality. Such areas can represent rooms, yards or, even, interiors of vehicles, but the areas have no geographical relationship to each other. One cannot, for example, look out the window of a house to see the backyard (unless these objects are placed in the same single area).

After areas are defined, objects of different sizes and shapes can be placed into an area to fill out an environment. Basic object types are called primitives (cuboids, pyramids, rectangles, lines, triangles, quadrilaterals, pentagons, hexagons, and sensors). A sensor is a single point that can detect a user's presence within a defined distance and, if programmed to do so, will fire on a user. Primitives can be resized and moved throughout the 3D area. Primitives can be combined to form a group of more complicated objects like homes or vehicles. Unfortunately, without circles, curves, or spheres, *Virtual Reality Studio* worlds tend to be blocky and angular.

Objects can be defined as visible, invisible, or destroyed. Invisible objects can be triggered and made visible. Destroyed objects can be triggered and, as a result, permanently removed. Objects can be painted and shaded from a palette of 256 color VGA, 16 color EGA or 4 color CGA.

Animation and interaction with objects are achieved by writing short programs called conditions. Fifty-one conditions use instructions which make up the Freescape Command Language. To program a cube to move both up and down as well as side to side, a user would edit the conditions to read as follows:

```
INCLUDE (2)
START
LOOP(20)
MOVE (40,0,0)
AGAIN
LOOP (20)
MOVE (-40,0,0)
AGAIN
RESTART
```

The animation begins when the user shoots the floor. There is also a bank of memory (variables) which can be used to store and view information relating to the environment and its effects. "Variable Manipulation" instructions will set a value, add and subtract values to and from variables, or compare values.

"Object Manipulation" instructions make objects visible or invisible. "Vehicle Commands" affect movement rates. "Conditional" instructions allow the execution of a program when an object is shot, involved in a collision or has its sensor activated. "Miscellaneous Commands" print text messages, set colors, play sounds and set a timer.

The editor employs clear icons and pull-down menus. Upon loading the program, a user is greeted with the Main Screen composed of a menu selector, view window, an info bar identifying the current location, short cut icons, mode icons, and Freescape icons which allow the user to walk or fly in any direction.

If this sounds complicated, that is because it is, indeed, complicated. The *Virtual Reality Studio* is not for the fainthearted or the boot-up-and-play-without-looking-at-the-manual crowd. Each area has to be painstakingly created and assembled, one object at a time.

I was shocked to find a library of only one large object, a single helicopter, for placement in an area. This is the only one of numerous objects illustrated on the front and back of the program package as being readily available to the user. Since a more complicated object like an automobile will require creating, sizing, and placing approximately 14-20 primitives, this oversight is no small matter, especially for those with limited time and little artistic talent. There is also no library of *conditions* that users can port easily into their "worlds."

A "Studio" game is included as part of the program package to illustrate the types of environments a user might create. The object of this game is to escape from a mysterious world and return to Earth. This reviewer failed to find any way to cut objects from this sample world for use in other 3-D worlds. Why these items are not made more readily available in a library accessible to the user is a mystery itself. The size of the program on disk is surprisingly small: approximately 300K. In an era of nine megabyte and more games, users are certainly shortchanged here. Requests on the Domark BBS as to whether an online library of objects or conditions exists or not, went unanswered.

The sample game is rather lame. Once the novelty of having unlimited control over movement wears off, there is little there. Ultimately, however, it is the Freescape world itself which this reviewer found unsatisfying. What is initially interesting to visit, soon becomes a heartless and barren place. Users wander from one space to the next as though exploring a deserted city long abandoned by all forms of life, whether human beings or their monstrous foes. Objects like robots or vehicles may appear and move along rigid paths, but these things are nothing more than zombie machines created and then, apparently, abandoned by their masters. Users with no interest in programming are advised to stay well away from *Virtual Reality Studio.* CGW



VIKING RATINGS

Ultima Underworld	A+
Ultima VII	A+
Global Quest	A
Planets Edge	B+
Jack Nick. Golf	A
Free D.C.	C-
Carrier Strike	A
Pacific Storm (MIDWAY)	C
Black Crypt	A
Merchant Colony	B-
Dreadnaughts	D+
Conflict Korea	B+

ADVENTURE / ROLE PLAY

PAST

	IBM	AMI
Bard's Tale (Const)	35	-
Black Crypt	-	34
Castles	36	36
Castles N. Camp.	19	-
Celtic Legends	-	May
Champions Krynn	34	34
Conquest of the Longbow	42	-
Curse Azure Bonds	34	34
Dark Lands	39	-
Death Knights Krynn	34	-
Dark Queen of Krynn	34	July
Dusk of the Gods	38	-
Eye of Beholder	34	34
Eye of Beholder 2	38	38
Flag	June	June
Four Crystals of Trazere	-	34
Gatewy Savage Frontier	34	34
Heimdall	June	42
Kings Quest 5 VGA	42	39
Kyrandia	June	June
Legacy of Necromancer	June	June
Lord of the Rings	36	36
Lord of the Rings 2	36	36
M&M CLouds of Xeen	39	July
Magic Candle 2	39	-
Martian Dreams	39	-
Might & Magic 3	39	39
Merchant Colony	32	-
Orbitus	32	38
Pirates	15	15
Pool of Radiance	34	34
Pool of Darkness	39	39
Prophecy of the Shadow	39	-
Rampart	28	28
Realms	Summer	Summer
Secret of Monkey Island	37	37
Secret of Monkey Island 2	39	39
Secret Silver Blades	34	34
Siege	38	-
Spellbound	Summer	-
Tales of Magic	39	-
Treasures Savage Frontier	34	-
Ultima 6	42	42
Ultima 7	47	-
Ultima Trilogy 2	47	-
Ultima Underworld	47	-
Uncharted Waters	43	-
Wizardry 6	39	39
Wizardry 7	June	June

PRESENT

Buzz Aldrin Space	June	-
D/generation	34	-
Elvira 1	43	43
Elvira 2	43	43
Heart of China	37	37
Indy Jones Atlantis	39	July
K.G.B.	Sep.	Sep.
Leisure Suit Larry 5	42	38
Lost Treas. Infocom	46	46
Oh No! More Lemmings!	22	22
Jaws of Cerberus	43	43
Lost in L.A.	38	-
Out of this World	37	37
Police Quest 3	42	37
Rocketeer w/Sound	42	-
Savage Empire	39	-
Sea Rogue	-	-
Spell Casting 201	39	-
Strike Commander	Sept	-
Willy Beamish	42	-

FUTURE

	IBM	AMI
A.G.E.	June	June
B.A.T. 2	-	May
Battletech 2	33	-
Buck Rogers	15	33
Buck Rogers 2	34	34
Breach 2	21	34
Dune	Spring	-
Epic	-	Spring
Elite Plus	19	-
Free D.C.	40	-
Hard Nova	34	34
Jonny Crash	Fall	-
Leather Godesses of Phobos 2	46	-
Mantis Fighter	June	-
Martian Memorandum	38	-
MechWarrior	24	-
Megatraveller 1	15	-
Megatraveller 2	39	Spring
Megatraveller 3	Fall	-
Nova 9	25	-
Planets Edge	38	-
Rise of Dragon VGA	39	39
Rules of Engagement	39	39
Space Quest 4	42	37
Spec. Ops 2 (Wing. Lo 2)	27	-
StarFlight 1	19	34
StarFlight 2	19	34
Star Trek 25th Anniversary	36	-
Twilight 2000	32	Summer
Twilight 2001	Jan 93	-
Ultrabots	June	-
Wing Commander	45	-
Wing Co. Secr. Miss. 1	21	-
Wing Co. Miss. 2	21	-
Wing Commander 2	47	-
W/C Spec Ops 1	27	-
Speechpak	15	-

HINT BOOKS

AD & D Clue Books	10	-
Chuck Yeager Handbook	15	-
Civilization	17	-
Eye of Beholder 2	12	-
Gosselin Hint Sheets	8	-
Gosselin Char. Edit	15	-
Falcon Air Combat	12	-
Lord of Rings	10	-
Lucasfilm Air Combat	16	-
Harpoon Battle Book	19	-
Might & Magic III Hint	15	-
Railroad Tycoon	12	-
Run 5 Magazine 1-17	5	-
Seria Hint Books	8	-
SIM Earth	19	-
Wing Commander Hintbook	15	-
Wizardry 6 Hint Book	12	-

HARDWARE

Ad Lib Gold		
1) PC 1000	Spring	-
2) T2000	Spring	-
Ad Lib (Micro Ch)	145	-
Soundblaster (Pro)	190	-
Soundblaster (Micro Ch)	225	-
Gravis Eliminator Card	29	-
Gravis (Joystick)	39	34
CH-Flightstick	49	-
Pro Audio Spectrum	239	-
Thunderboard	99	-
Thrustmaster	79	-
Thrustmaster Weapons	79	

CARRIER STRIKE

From the author of Wesern Front and Second Front, now comes his WWII Pacific game. An extremely detailed look at carrier operations form May '42 until '44. 5 scenarios and a campaign game are included. will include graphic exploxins and full sound board support.

IBM $42

CARRIERS AT WAR

Finally, after all these years, (?) the ultimate WWII carrier battle game is available for the IBM. Will include the battles of Pearl Harbor, Coral Sea, Midway, Eastern Solomons, Santa Cruz and the Marianas Turkey Shoot.

IBM $42

Hopefully in June '92

STRATEGY

PRE WW II

	IBM	AMI
Bandit Kings China (KOEI)	39	39
Battles of Napoleon (SSI)	36	-
Civil War Vol. 1 (SSG) or 2 or 3	25	-
Genghis Khan (KOEI)	37	37
Gettysburg (SSI)	39	-
Gold of Americas (SSG)	25	25
Grand Fleet (SIMCAN)	39	39
L'Empereur	38	-
No Greater Glory (SSI)	43	-
Nobunaga's Amb. 2 (KOEI)	39	-
Prelude to Jutland (GQ)	29	-
Red Baron VGA (DYNAMIX)	42	37
Romance 3 Kingdoms 2	42	42
Warlords/Enhanced (SSG)	32	32

WORLD WAR II

Aces of the Pacific	47	-
Action Stations V. 3.2	32	32
Action Sta. Data	17	17
Air Raid Pearl Harbor (GQ)	29	-
B-17 Flying Fortress	Summer	-
Banzai (GQ)	29	-
B. Tank Barbarosa (S.C.)	39	39
Bismarck (GQ)	29	-
Carrier Strike	42	-
Fleet Med (SIM CAN)	39	39
Herdes of 357th	July	-
Heroes of the 357th	April	-
In Harm's Way (SIM CAN)	39	39
Malta Storm (SIM CAN)	39	39
Mariana's Turkey Shoot	29	-
Midway (GQ)	29	-
MBT Kursk (SIM CAN)	39	39
Pacific Storm (SOLOM)	39	39
Pacific Storm (MIDWAY)	39	-
Panzer Battles (SSG)	25	34
Patton Strikes Back (BROD)	28	-
Perfect General WW II Disk	22	22
Rommel N. Africa (SSG)	28	-
Second Front (SSI)	39	39
Secret Weapons Luft.	44	-
P-38 (LUCAS) (SWOTL)	20	-
P-80 (LUCAS) (SWOTL)	20	-
DO 335	20	-
HE 162	20	-
Silent Service 2 (MICROPR)	36	36
Their Finest Hour/Battlehawks	44	19
Third Reich	August	28
Typhoon of Steel (SSI)	17	39
V for Victory	Summer	-
Western Front	39	-

SCI-FI

Armada 2525	34	-
Breach 2	21	34
Imperium (E.A.)	28	28
Reach for the Stars (SSG)	28	28
Robosport	38	-
Rules of Engagement	39	39
Second Conflict (Windows)	34	-

JUNE SPECIALS

Buck Rogers 1	15	-
Dragon Strike	15	-
Typhoon of Steel	15	-
War of the Lance	15	-
Pools of Radience	15	-

MODERN

	IBM	AMI
Adv. Tac Air Com.	Summer	-
Avenger A-10	Summer	-
Chuck Yeager Air Combat	39	-
Conflict Korea	37	-
Conflict Middle East (SSI)	39	39
F-117A Nighthawk (VGA)	43	-
F-15 III	Fall	-
Falcon 3.0	45	-
Global Effect	34	34
Gunship 2000 (MICROPR)	38	-
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Harpoon #2 Or #3	20	20
Harpoon #4	22	22
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Harpoon Scen. Edit. (360)	28	28
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MBT Centr. Germany (S C)	39	39
MBT Middle East	39	39
MBT North Germany (S C)	39	39
Megafortress (360)	39	39
Megafortress Mission Disk #1	24	July
Megafortress Miss #2	24	-
Red Storm Risin. (MICROPR)	19	19
Shuttle	37	-
7th Fleet (SIM CAN)	39	39
Team Yankee (EUROPEAN)	32	39
Team Yankee 2	-	32

GENERAL

A-Train	June	-
Civilization	38	-
Command HQ (MICROPL)	34	-
Global Conquest	39	-
Lost Admiral	38	-
Perfect General	38	38
Perfect General WW II Disk	22	22
Populous 2	-	39
Populous World Editor	-	15
PowerMonger (E.A.)	July	34
PowerMonger WW I Disk	-	22
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SimAnt	38	38
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Sim Earth	45	-
Sim Life	Summer	-
Theatre of War	34	-

SPORTS

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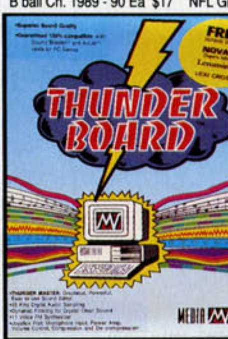
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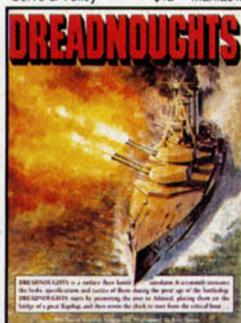
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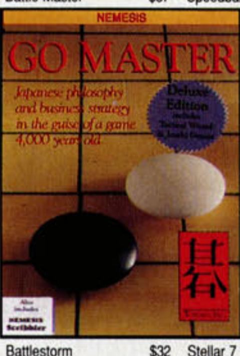
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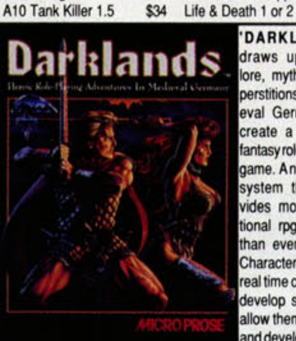
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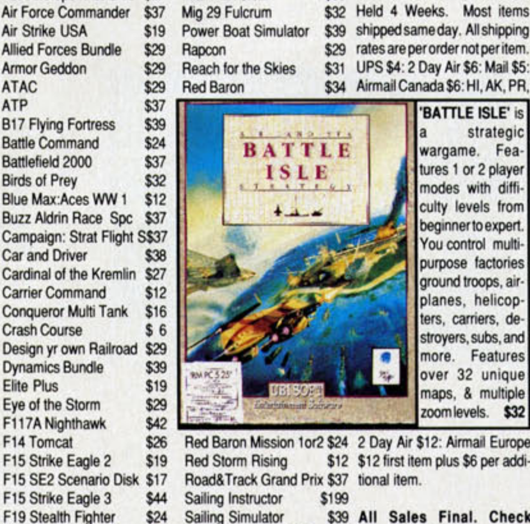
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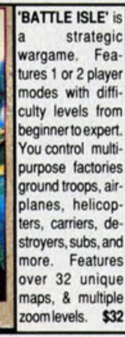
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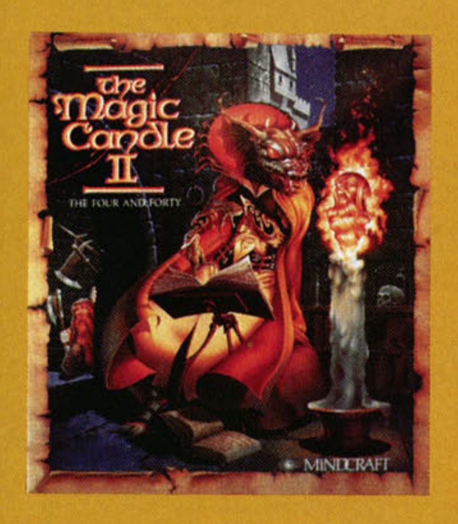
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TITLE: The Magic Candle II: The Four and Forty
SYSTEM: IBM/Tandy & Compatibles
PRICE: $89.95
SOUND CARDS: Roland, AdLib & Sound Blaster
DESIGNERS: Ali. N. Atabek & James B. Thomas
PUBLISHER: Mindcraft Software, Torrance, CA 90501

I Can't Eat Another Byte, My Gurtex is Killing Me

Mindcraft's "Magic Candle II"

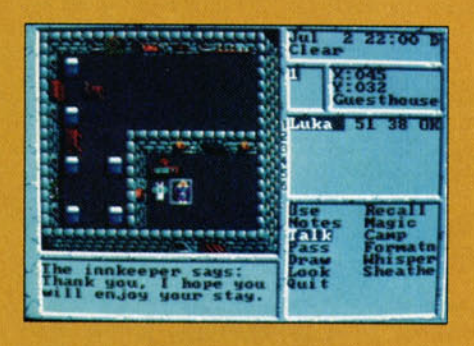
by Stefan Petrucha



On the surface, *The Magic Candle II* (*MC2*) Mindcraft's second foray into the realm of the four and forty, begs comparison to its spiritual father, *Ultima.* In some ways, it would be easy to dismiss *MC2* as a "poor man's" version of that game. In terms of the graphics, player interface, screen composition, even the use of dialogue and NPCs, the game seems identical, with minor exceptions, to older versions of that benchmark series. To be fair, few games could stand up to the state-of-the-art *Ultima* technology. Still, on a technical basis, *MC2* doesn't fare well at all. For example, a card enclosed with the game apologizes for the missing mouse driver. Maybe a few years ago this would have seemed reasonable, but these days...



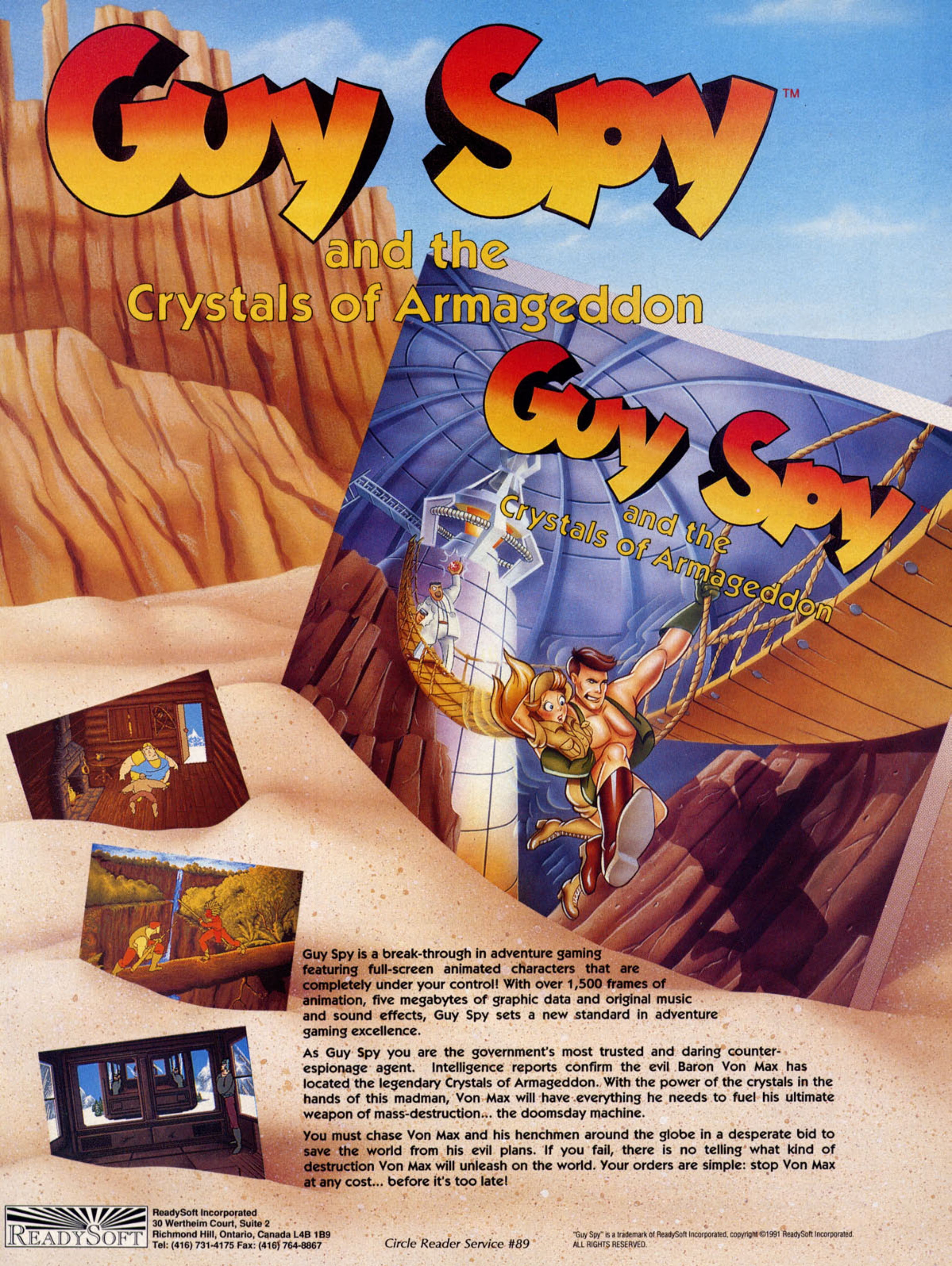
The game graphics, while by no means shoddy, are similarly archaic. The party, represented by a series of squarish illos, are arranged in a flat, static configuration. When the group can't fit through a particular corridor, a *Formation* command must be used to re-arrange the marching order.



Two major game features, however, are unique to the *Magic Candle* series. The first involves the size of the party. While the main group can only consist of six adventurers, over thirty NPCs form a sort of "auxiliary" corp that can be assigned to: work at shops, train in various skills, or be sent off to wait long lonely months at various strongholds. To be honest, this reviewer found it hard to keep track of everyone. As we speak, several loyal hobbits are still hard at work at in the city of Telermain, wondering when their leader will return.

The second major innovation is the "Notes" feature — a great idea that proves to be more trouble than its worth. Rather than requiring pencil and paper, *MC2* "records" game info for the player as the game progresses. Unfortunately, these "notes" are either uselessly massive (when set to NORMAL or MAXIMUM) or they fail to record important data (when set to MINIMUM). A new "notes" file is generated every play session, causing even more frustration. Files from earlier sessions must be accessed outside of the game, using a word processing program. Sadly, this reviewer found himself spending a lot of time searching through notes files, and ultimately taking notes on them. It should be possible for "key" information to be encoded so that these files can be streamlined. In any case, this feature should either be vastly improved or taken outside and shot.

This is probably difficult to believe by now, but beyond these problems, this reviewer actually enjoyed the game a great deal. While MC2 is a surface failure, on a more basic story-telling level, it is a resounding success. The fantasy world, eccentric and fun, is in many ways more engaging than the glittery "huff and puff" of the more advanced CRPGs. The word "adorable" comes to mind, but that might turn off the more macho player. "Charming", were it not for the magic pun, might be a more apt description.



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Basically, the plot involves the rescue of four Eldens (the "four" of the four and forty), who have been candle-trapped by a johnny-come-lately demon named Zakhad, and hidden throughout the evil land of Gurtex. Naturally, they must be saved by the player's huge and somewhat difficult to organize stalwart band. Along the way, players encounter a host of typical towns, dungeons, towers and castles that ultimately lead to a closing sequence (involving an egg, an orb and sending a crown prince to bed) that presents the odd world at its quirky best.

One of the major ways *MC2* conveys its sense of world is through its NPCs. They talk often, sometimes randomly, expressing their hopes and fears, conveying bits of historical info and reminding the player about important clues. These little intrusions into the tramping and stabbing of game play go a long way to creating the atmosphere that *MC2* excels at. *Ultima* flirts with random NPC commentary, but *MC2* has all but perfected it.

Though the music is minor and non-descript, the sound effects, like the story, are delightful. There are whooshes and thuds during combat, a rather gross sound like a cat with a hairball to indicate a character has been poisoned and a "twinkle" for some spells that must have been lifted from "Bewitched." Though most of the sound bytes got at least a giggle out of this reviewer, we have yet to play a game where certain sounds (repeated over and over) don't eventually grate on the nerves (Will game designers and sound programmers never stop using those incessant "tromp-tromp" walking noises? This reviewer still has a headache).

On the lighter side, the aforementioned *Formation* command turned out to be an excuse for one of the better game puzzles. Certain hallways are mined with a series of dastardly "teleportals." In these instances, *Formation* must be used in inventive ways to maneuver around them — an excellent example of how a seeming weakness can be turned into a strength.

In general, *MC2* is not a game for the impatient. Travel across the lands of Gurtex involves frequent rest, lots of food and lots of battles. Finding the sundry story threads is difficult, often requiring slow, leisurely exploration. Unfortunately, some of the more important story threads are a little too well-hidden. This reviewer often found himself "dead-ended."

Combat's a little magic happy. In the later stages of the game, its difficult for even a good warrior to get in more than a few kills. Likewise, finding the right spell books are crucial, but once the player has them, certain simple strategies present themselves. For example, using a *Timestop* to freeze foes for an extra turn, followed by a *Zutyun* (there go those names again) to destroy their armor, generally led this reviewer to an early victory, often before the monsters could fire a retaliatory shot. In rare instances where the monsters can't be destroyed in those first rounds, the *Disappear* spell provided ample protection. This proved particularly interesting when the monsters responded in kind, leaving the room apparently empty while invisible party members tromped around invisible monsters.

As far as documentation goes, it is disappointing that most of the character and story notes, in essence, the game's selling points, are buried in the back of the manual, behind all the game play info, when it seems the other way around would be more advised. There's a paragraph book which must be consulted from time to time during game play. While the prose within it is pithy and amusing enough, such books in general are not appealing. Any mechanism which takes the player physically out of the game is an unnecessary distraction. *[Ed: This, of course, is not a universally held opinion among CRPGers. We have heard exactly the opposite observation with regard to the off-line paragraphs from* Wasteland, Dragon Wars *and* Star Saga I & II, *for example.]*

All in all, The Magic Candle 2: The Four and the Forty is a strong effort, but a mixed bag. Those who want a great musical score and the capacity to push the limits of their new 486/33 boards with SVGA graphics, will be sorely disappointed. For those, however, to whom a CRPG means story, quirky characters and plenty of atmosphere, Gurtex is the ideal place to plan a long and entertaining computer vacation. CGW



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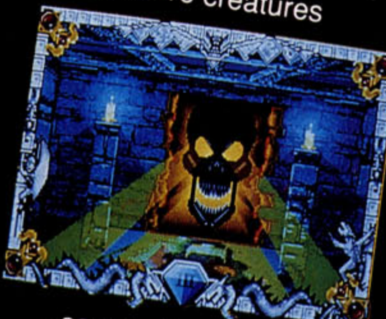
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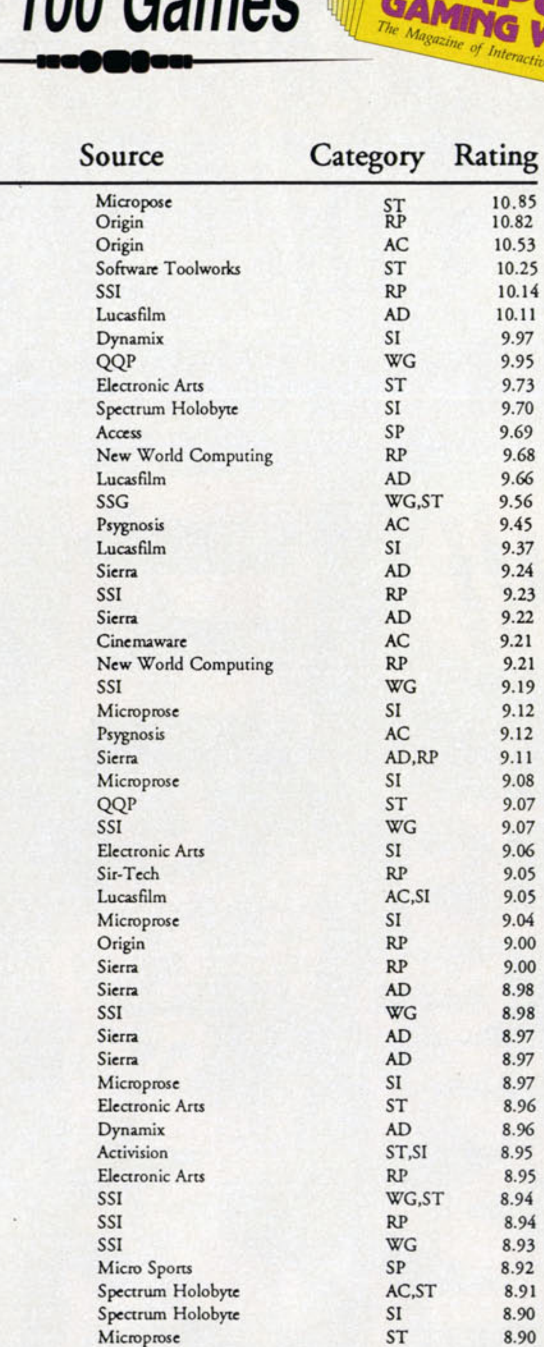
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2	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.82
3	Wing Commander II	Origin	AC	10.53
4	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	ST	10.25
5	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	10.14
6	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge	Lucasfilm	AD	10.11
7	Red Baron	Dynamix	SI	9.97
8	The Perfect General	QQP	WG	9.95
9	Populous II	Electronic Arts	ST	9.73
10	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	9.70
11	Links	Access	SP	9.69
12	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	RP	9.68
13	The Secret of Monkey Island	Lucasfilm	AD	9.66
14	Warlords	SSG	WG,ST	9.56
15	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	9.45
16	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	Lucasfilm	SI	9.37
17	Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	AD	9.24
18	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.23
19	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.22
20	Wings	Cinemaware	AC	9.21
	Planet's Edge	New World Computing	RP	9.21
22	Second Front	SSI	WG	9.19
23	Gunship 2000	Microprose	SI	9.12
	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	9.12
25	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	9.11
26	Silent Service II	Microprose	SI	9.08
27	The Lost Admiral	QQP	ST	9.07
	No Greater Glory	SSI	WG	9.07
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44	Sword of Aragon	SSI	WG,ST	8.94
	Pools of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.94
46	Overrun	SSI	WG	8.93
47	All American College Football	Micro Sports	SP	8.92
48	Super Tetris	Spectrum Holobyte	AC,ST	8.91
49	Falcon	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	8.90
	Global Conquest	Microprose	ST	8.90

Top Wargames

12.00 / 11.00 / 10.00 / 9.00 / 8.00

Poll #92 | Poll #93 | Poll #94 | Poll #95

Perfect General | Warlords | Second Front

Top Action Games

12.00 / 11.00 / 10.00 / 9.00 / 8.00

Poll #92 | Poll #93 | Poll #94 | Poll #95

Wing Commander II | Lemmings | Wings

Top Sports Games

12.00 / 11.00 / 10.00 / 9.00 / 8.00

Poll #92 | Poll #93 | Poll #94 | Poll #95

Links | All American College Football | 4-D Boxing

51	Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf	Accolade	S	8.89
	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix/Sierra	AD	8.89
	Martian Memorandum	Access	AD	8.89
54	NFL Challenge	XOR Corporation	ST	8.87
	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	SP	8.87
56	Romance of the 3 Kingdoms	Koei	ST,RP	8.86
	Star Trek: 25th Aniversary	Interplay	AD	8.86
58	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	SP	8.85
59	Populous	Electronic Arts	ST	8.84
60	Elvira	Accolade	RP	8.82
61	Command HQ	Microplay	WG,ST	8.81
	Might & Magic II	New World	RP	8.81
	Rules of Engagement	Mindcraft	ST	8.81
	Tracon	Wesson International	ST	8.81
65	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	RP	8.80
66	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	SSI	RP	8.79
67	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	ST	8.78
68	Bard's Tale III	Electronic Arts	RP	8.77
69	Heart of China	Dynamix	AD	8.75
70	PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	SP	8.74
71	Bandit Kings	Koei	ST,RP	8.73
	Covert Action	Microprose	AC,AD	8.73
73	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	8.72
	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	8.72
75	Breach 2	Omnitrend	ST,RP	8.71
	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	8.71
77	Neuromancer	Interplay	AD	8.70
	Megafortress	Three-Sixty	SI,ST	8.70
	Wayne Gretyzky Hockey II	Bethesda Softworks	SP	8.70
80	F-15 Strike Eagle II	Microprose	SI	8.69
81	Action Stations	RAW Entertainment	WG	8.68
	Martian Dreams	Origin	RP	8.68
83	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	8.67
	Curse of the Azure Bonds	SSI	RP	8.67
85	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	SP	8.66
86	Indiana Jones/Graphic Adv.	Lucasfilm	AD	8.65
	Ballistyx	Psygnosis	AC	8.65
88	Armada 2525	Interstel	ST	8.63
89	Wayne Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	AC,ST	8.62
90	Pool of Radiance	SSI	RP	8.61
91	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	SSI	SP	8.60
92	King's Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.59
	Wide World of Sports Boxing	Data East	SP	8.59
94	Buck Rogers	SSI	RP	8.57
95	Chessmaster 2100	Software Toolworks	ST	8.56
	Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	AC,RP	8.56
97				8.55
98	Genghis Khan	Koei	ST,RP	8.54
99	Future Wars	Interplay	AD	8.53
100	Panzer Strike	SSI	WG	8.51

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A monthly survey of the readers of Computer Gaming World Magazine.

Prepared by Golden Data Services.

PC Research Hit Lists of Top-Selling Software August, 1992

PC Games (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Ultima VII (Origin)
2.	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe (Lucasfilm Games)
3.	SimCity (Maxis)
4.	Star Trek 25th Anniversary (Interplay)
5.	Ultima Underworld (Origin)
6.	Global Conquest (MicroPlay)
7.	Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition (Accolade)
8.	Civilization (MicroProse)
9.	Risk (Virgin)
10.	Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum Holobyte)
11.	Police Quest III (Sierra On-Line)
12.	SimAnt (Maxis)
13.	Gateway to the Savage Frontier (Strategic Simulations)
14.	Flight Simulator Upgrade (Mallard)
15.	Flight Simulator 4.0 (Microsoft)
16.	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles-Arcade (Konami)
17.	Trump Castle (Capstone)
18.	American Gladiators (Gametek)
19.	Lost Treasures of Infocom (Activision)
20.	Chessmaster 3000 (Software Toolworks)

Home Education (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego (Broderbund)
2.	Where in the U.S.A. is Carmen Sandiego (Broderbund)
3.	Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing (Software Toolworks)
4.	New Math Blaster Plus (Davidson)
5.	Playroom (Broderbund)
6.	Reader Rabbit 1 (Learning Company)
7.	Oregon Trail (MECC)
8.	Treehouse (Broderbund)
9.	Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego (Broderbund)
10.	Reader Rabbit 2 (Learning Company)

Results for Amiga and Macintosh software which normally appear in this

column were unavailable this month.

List is based on units solf by Software Etc., Babbages, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique. For more information, please contact PC Research at (703) 435-1025.

What You Have Been Playing Lately ...

The Feedback Forum of Reader Responses

Beginning in issue #93, we added a new question to our CGW Poll cards. Along with the list of games to be rated (which is the basis for the Top 100 Chart and serves as a lasting indication of which games are quality works and which are not) we also wanted to know which games have grabbed you, which are hot, which keep you up into the wee hours, which have become the foundation of your spouse's divorce filing. The following list was composed by adding up the number of times a game was written into the blank line provided on the CGW Poll card and putting them into rank. Since the data for this column will not be accumulated over time, this list will be more dynamic and will serve as a good indication of just which games have been responsible for the greatest recent loss in GHP (gross human productivity)

Feedback from CGW #95, June 1992:

1. Civilization (MicroProse)
2. Ultima Underworld (Origin)
3. Ultima 7 (Origin)
4. The Perfect General (QQP)
5. Wing Commander II (Origin)
6. Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe (Lucasfilm)
7. Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum Holobyte)
8. Global Conquest (MicroProse)
9. Eye of the Beholder II (SSI)
10. The Lost Admiral (QQP)

Interesting responses of the month:

Zork I
Oil Barons
MUDS (Multi-User Dungeon Scenarios) on the Internet.

Quotes of note:

"If cocaine is anything like playing *Civilization*, then I understand what an addiction is."

-Stephen Feger. Sunnyside, NY

"My favorite strategy game is *Lost Admiral*. I constantly go back to it."

-Thurman Logan. Farlane, NY

"*Ultima 7* is a good game but the controls are not what I like in Role-playing. Eating, sleeping, fighting are better in *Ultima 6*."

-Ed Searor, Adams, NY

"I got *Ultima 7* a week ago and I just can't stop playing . It is an excellent program with only 1 flaw — the real time combat. I prefer the taking of turns for combat but I must admit that once your character gets stronger, fighting does seem easier."

-Gory Garner. Robins AFB, GA

"The A.I. in *The Perfect General* is weak; I found it to be a much more able opponent in *The Lost Admiral*."

-David Ginn. San Dimas, CA.

"The *Lost Admiral* and *The Perfect General* are great games."

-Chris Gorsuch. Wescasville, PA.

Advertisers List

Hall of Fame

Computer Gaming World's Hall of Fame

The games in *Computer Gaming World's Hall of Fame* have been highly rated by our readers over time. They have been rated for their impact on the computer gaming hobby during their peak period of influence and acceptance by our readership. Note that the dates listed for each game are the copyright dates and may precede the actual release dates. Specific formats listed are those which *CGW* has in its possession. Each month, we will publish a brief description of some of these classic games as part of this listing.

The Bard's Tale (**Electronic Arts**, 1985), Many Formats

The Bard's Tale excelled within the conventions of the CRPG genre of its day and established the state-of-the-art for 3-point animated monsters and 3-D mazes presented in color (both in "windowed" presentations). The "look and feel" of the series became CRPG standards. Later, *The Bard's Tale III* was one of the earliest games with automapping, another CRPG innovation which was widely used.

Chessmaster (**Software Toolworks**, 1986) Many Formats

Chessmaster 2000 quickly became the standard against which all computer chess programs were to be measured. It was, arguably, the strongest chess program of its time when it was inducted into the CGW Hall of Fame and has constantly improved through the 2100 level and the current 3000 level of the game.

Dungeon Master (**FTL Software**, 1987) Amiga, Atari ST, IBM

Dungeon Master, originally introduced on the Atari ST, virtually established its own genre of first-person perspective dungeon romps. With state-of-the-art graphics that moved away from the "windowed" screen look, as well as realistic sound effects to set the tone of the adventure, *Dungeon Master* became a showcase product that has been much emulated within the CRPG genre.

Earl Weaver Baseball (**Electronic Arts**, 1986) Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

In its original form, *Earl Weaver Baseball* was the quintessential sports game. It offered reasonable statistical accuracy, was the first to use a "physics" model as opposed to strictly using a statistical model in resolving plays, featured both an action and manage-only mode, allowed complete flexibility in drafting and editing players and rosters and was the first to allow customization of stadiums and team uniforms.

Empire (**Interstel**, 1978) Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM

Originally published on mainframes in the late '70s, Walter Bright's game of planetary conquest mixed with exploration and an economic basis for unit construction was revamped for personal computers in the mid-'80s. A new interface and the addition of new units enhanced a classic game system.

F-19 Stealth Fighter (**MicroProse**, 1988) IBM

Released prior to the government's public announcement of the F-117A, F-19 Stealth Fighter provided additional challenges beyond those of the typical combat flight simulation of its day. By creating the electronic profile of the craft and adding the element of stealth, F-19 became the first combat simulation where it was more fun not to dogfight that to engage in one.

Gettysburg: The Turning Point (**Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, 1986) Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM

The tactical combat system used in *Gettysburg: The Turning Point* spawned its own series of American Civil War games. Many players felt that it was the first "realistic" wargame in terms of the way it handled "What if" orders of battle with computer-moderated random set-up.

Gunship (**MicroProse**, 1989) Amiga, C-64, IBM

Harpoon (**Three-Sixty Pacific**, 1989) Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

Kampfgruppe (**Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, 1985) Many formats.

King's Quest V (**Sierra**, 1990) IBM

M-1 Tank Platoon (**MicroProse**, 1989) Amiga, IBM

Mech Brigade (**Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, 1985) Many formats

Might & Magic (**New World Computing**, 1986) Apple, C-64, IBM

M.U.L.E. (**Electronic Arts**, 1983) Atari 8-bit, C-64

Pirates (**MicroProse**, 1987) Many formats

Railroad Tycoon (**MicroProse**, 1990) Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

SimCity (**Maxis**, 1987) Many formats

Starflight (**Electronic Arts**, 1986) Amiga, C-64, IBM, Sega

Their Finest Hour (**Lucasfilm**, 1989) Amiga, Atari ST, IBM

Ultima III (**Origin**, 1983) Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM

Ultima IV (**Origin**, 1985) Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM

Ultima VI (**Origin**, 1990) Amiga, IBM

War in Russia (**Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, 1984) Apple

Wing Commander (**Origin**, 1991) IBM, Sega

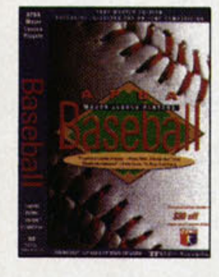
Wizardry (**Sir-Tech Software**, 1981) Many formats CGW

Ballpark Under Construction

Miller Associates' APBA Major League Players Baseball 1.5

by Win Rogers

TITLE: APBA Major League Players Baseball 1.5
SYSTEMS: IBM
OF PLAYERS: 1-2 and League Play
PRICE: Master Edition with 1991 Season Disk $39.95
Stat Master 2.0: $39.95
Micro Manager 1.0: $49.95
Baseball Wizard: 2.0: $39.95 most other season disks $24.95
Duerk's Electronic Baseball Encyclopedia 1.10: $29.95
PROTECTION: Limit on copies allowed (Micro Manager only)
DESIGNER: Miller Associates
PUBLISHER: Miller Associates, 11 Burtis Ave., Suite, New Canaan, CT 06840



APBA Major League Baseball's version 1.5 has been out a year now, but the release of its *MicroManager* add-on makes this a whole new ball game. While the implementation of this and other Miller Associates innovations leaves room for improvement, they hold great promise for baseball simulations of the future.

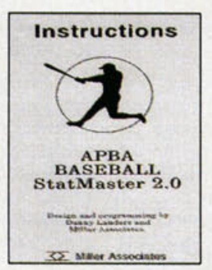
APBA is the computer version of the classic baseball table game that has been around since 1951. Like *Strat-O-Matic* and *Pursue the Pennant*, table-game rivals that have also been translated to the computer, computerized *APBA* is a manage-only game that eschews graphics, animation and arcade action in order to appeal strictly to the statistics-and-strategy baseball fan (*Strat-O-Matic Version 3* was reviewed in *CGW* #94). There may always be a market niche for serious non-graphic baseball simulations but only if they use the memory they save by not excluding graphics in favor of statistics, more innovative playing options and analytic tools, and more realistic models.

The basic *APBA Baseball* offers an attractive interface for two players to manage teams playing against each other. It comes with complete 1991 *Major League Baseball Players' Association* statistics and utilizes the many other player disks sold by the company. The screen, less cluttered than *Strat-O-Matic*'s, clearly shows the current lineups, the line score, the defensive players and baserunners with their abilities, and the batter and pitcher with their performances thus far in the game. Additional information is available through keystrokes and a menu. Play-by-play text appears in a window and the speed at which it appears can be modified to suit the gamer's pace. Miller Associates believes subjective elements are important in its models as well as the objective numbers, and the time they took to develop this clever, nicely-varied play-by-play text is appreciated. Injuries play a part in the simulation, but warming up a pitcher before bringing him into the game does not. Like *Strat-O-Matic* it operates in a play-by-play mode, not pitch-by-pitch. It does not include *Strat-O-Matic*'s ballpark differentials.

A box score can be printed out at the end of the game. One can manage rosters, trade players, and create a new "organization" (a group of leagues, divisions, and teams) through the Draft program, which is provided with each player disk and is run from DOS. A copy of DRAFT.EXE must be stored in each data subdirectory and can address only the players and organizations in that subdirectory.

The basic game, the so-called "*Master Edition*" of *APBA Baseball*, is quite limited. The gamer cannot access the statistics from a series of games, play against the computer or have the computer play both sides. Unlike *Strat-O-Matic* it offers no way to program a season of games and replay that season in superfast mode. The procedures in "Draft" for creating a new organization and trading players are cumbersome. The add-on modules that increase the capabilities of the game are pricey, especially since they probably can't be found in software stores and will have to be ordered from the publisher at full price. They add some features that other computer games have had for years and provide some unique capabilities, but they are not smoothly integrated and the game still lacks some desirable features. The name *APBA*, however, is a revered name with a definite mystique (starting with the mystery of what the letters stand for), and the game has devoted followers.

Putting the Pieces Together



With this upgrade players can finally keep all *APBA* utility programs and data disks in subdirectories on their hard disks if they have enough disk space. Two of the available add-ons to the basic program have recently been upgraded. They are not accessed from within the game but run from the DOS prompt. *StatMaster 2.0* allows one to keep standings and statistics for all games after one has initialized the organization. *APBA* game results are saved as box scores that can be viewed in the *StatMaster* module. After a cumbersome updating process one can view or print league standings, individual and team performance statistics and league leader lists in a variety of categories.

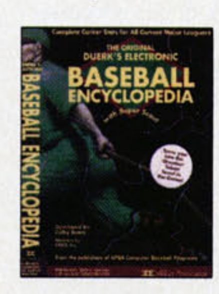
Wizard 2.0 allows one to change the ratings of existing players or create new players for the game either by entering statistics created from scratch or by importing them from *Duerk's Electronic Baseball Encyclopedia* (described below). *Wizard* creates a rough approximation of the rating card that the *APBA* company would create for that player. The gamer can modify statistics and ratings to suit any pet theory about how data from different years should be "normalized." However, it does not accept data broken down against left and right-handed opponents, and so all its created players have the same platoon differential.

Wizard works better than *Draft* at initializing an organization so that stats can be kept from its games. It will not copy an organization from one subdirectory to another, but with patience a new

combination of teams can be created on a different subdirectory. One must first copy the players of the desired teams to a new data subdirectory a team at a time. Players will not be assigned to teams on the new subdirectory so one then needs to create a new organization on the new subdirectory, set up the teams anew and stock them through *Draft.*

Another add-on, the *General Manager* (not tested), allows gamers to organize a league to play *APBA* over a modem through the *Computer Sports Network.* On-line buffs should be warned, however, that *General Manager 1.5* is not compatible with the new *MicroManager* and *StatMaster* utilities. This may mean keeping two different versions of *APBA* on one's hard disk.

The publishers supplied me with a Beta copy of yet another add-on utility to be sold separately, *Draft 2.0,* an upgrade of the utility currently provided with each player disk. *Draft 2.0* will run from DOS and access any and all data disks and subdirectories, though it will still deal with only one subdirectory at a time and will not move players or teams between subdirectories. It will make it easy to initialize new organizations and will help gamers draft the best possible teams by allowing them to filter and sort the available players by various criteria. It will include a Markov Expected Runs Calculation and the Pankin Line-Up Optimizer, innovative analytic tools that evaluate the run-producing capabilities and overall strength of different lineups and lineup orders.



Miller Associates also publishes *Duerk's Electronic Baseball Encyclopedia,* first released a year ago with the season-by-season records of all players active in 1990 and now appearing with 1991 data. Owners of the first release can buy the new data disk and merge the two data sets. Disks of player data from earlier eras are promised. *Duerk's Encyclopedia* stands on its own as an interesting product apart from any connection with *APBA* Baseball. It is an interactive reference tool that allows searches, sorts and comparisons of its data in a variety of ways that facilitate fantasy league research, historical study, and comparative player evaluation.

This exciting product could eventually provide the ability to sort and analyze data from all eras of baseball history, and, with the aid of *Wizard,* to put any player onto an *APBA* roster. This would reduce the cost of buying previous season disks from the manufacturer and the effort of entering player data by hand. I hope the rumor is true that the product will be expanded to incorporate Linear Weight Run values from *Total Baseball* to make it an even more useful tool. It would be nice if it could export data to spreadsheets (now possible only through the clipboard when it is running under *Windows*) or to other publishers' baseball simulations.



Talkin' BaseballTalk

The biggest news about *APBA,* however, is the *MicroManager* module. *APBA* fans can finally manage a baseball team against a computer opponent or watch two computer-managed teams play each other. Nearly all baseball programs have built-in managers, and *Earl Weaver Baseball II* and *Strat-O-Matic* now have "programmable" managers that can be customized not only with saved lineups and pitching rotations but also with respect to their tendencies to yank the starting pitcher, play an aggressive running game, pinch hit in the late innings and so forth. The *MicroManager* module goes much farther, and provides access to a sophisticated artificial-intelligence language, *BaseballTalk,* that gives the serious baseball strategist the ability to construct managerial decision rules from scratch and thus have complete control over the "personality" of each manager. In modeling managers of past eras for more realistic replay one is limited only by one's knowledge, imagination and patience.

The *MicroManager* module also adds the capability to replay a series of games (up to 255) between any two teams, with human or computer managers, the latter following preset lineups and pitching rotations. It is not able to schedule or replay a complete league season.

BaseballTalk is a challenging programming language with no short-cuts for the casual fan. One defines concepts, creates functions that manipulate those concepts, and sets levels of confidence that the outcome will be successful, so that if more than one strategy is possible the manager will select the one most likely to succeed. The resulting "playbook," or collection of decision rules, is saved under whatever manager name the gamer chooses. *APBA*'s managers can be team-specific, not just generic. That is, the rules can dictate whom to use in pinch-running situations by actually designating a particular player or players by name, not just in terms of the players' speed ratings.

Blackie and Blaze

The program comes with sample manager playbooks for "Blackie Dugan" and "Blaze Pascual" to serve as examples. Each playbook runs to about a hundred pages when printed out. Blaze is quicker to remove his starting pitcher than Blackie, less likely to platoon, and more likely to wait for the big hit where Blackie will try to bunt and steal for a run. The gamer can access the playbook of each manager, make modifications, and save the result under a different name, which is much easier than building a manager profile from scratch. Eventually the company hopes to provide more model playbooks and overlays, on the analogy of Lotus templates, to assist the novice. The manual is a good introduction to this complex, open-ended utility, and Miller Associates has a book in preparation, *Baseball Strategy: Blackie Dugan's Playbook Explained,* that will be must reading for those who want to get the most out of the *MicroManager.*

The *MicroManager* is not a separate utility program but has been integrated into the game itself. This can cause confusion to those not already familiar with *APBA,* because one may have to look through two manuals to figure out some menus. The *MicroManager* can operate in "run" mode (i.e. invisibly) or in "step" mode, with a window that opens to show the computer evaluating decision rules — an interesting learning tool. While in "step" mode one can have the simulation stop at every point where the man-

ager has made a strategic decision, or stop only where certain selected rules are involved. However, when I was playing against Blackie in "run" mode the program asked him questions about sending his runners home or trying for an extra base that should not have appeared on the screen.

It is important to understand the limitations of the *MicroManager* in its current incarnation. Blackie doesn't check-in until after the playing of the National Anthem; he cannot set a lineup or a pitching rotation on his own (though the manual seems to suggest otherwise). The gamer can write a decision rule specifying a pitching rotation or implement one without using *BaseballTalk* by means of the five different lineups that can be stored, but Blackie will follow it mindlessly. He can't keep track of whether his pitchers have had too much work over the past few games and make changes or recognize that his opponent is starting a lefty and modify the starting lineup accordingly. This reduces the realism of the result when a series of games is played between two teams with computer managers.

Despite the great potential of the *Micro Manager, APBA* is still essentially a one-game-at-a-time simulation. The company is planning another module that will broaden Blackie's view beyond a single game and make full-season replays possible. Buyers should not pay for the expensive *MicroManager* add-on now unless they understand its limitations and want what it has to offer — infinite control over the strategic options that open up after a game has begun, but requiring mastery of a complex programming language.

Other improvements would help to justify the cost of these modules. The manuals were printed before the programs were finished so there are last-minute changes to look out for on inserts and README files. The utilities could be better integrated and accessible through a program shell that would not require exiting to DOS. Routines for updating stats and trading players between subdirectories could be more transparent and less cumbersome.

At this point *APBA Baseball* with its array of companion products is a work in progress, an impressive ballpark under construction. Devoted *APBA*ers will applaud the *MicroManager*, and all baseball strategy buffs can learn from it. While difficult to master, it gives great power to the user and lays bare the logic that underlies all baseball simulations. The link to *Duerk's Electronic Baseball Encyclopedia* opens up the possibility of selecting rosters from thousands of eligible players. These developments are unique and exciting, but for what it delivers today, at the price asked, *APBA Baseball* would not be my first choice for a baseball simulation.

CGW



IN OTHER WORDS, PEOPLE MUCH LIKE YOURSELF.

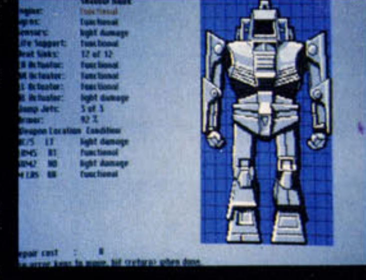
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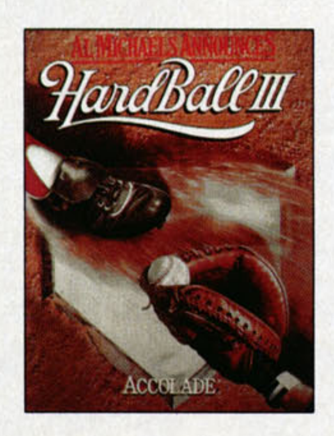
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Circle Reader Service #65



Sights and Sounds of the Summer Game

Accolade's Al Michaels Announces *HardBall III*

by Win Rogers

TITLE:Al Michaels Announces HardBall III
SYSTEM:IBM
PLAYERS:1-2 and league play
PRICE:$59.95
PROTECTION:Code-Wheel Look-Up
DEVELOPER:MindSpan

HardBall III is a heavy hitter in the competitive lineup of baseball simulations. The new release is built on the foundation created by *HardBall* and *HardBall II*, popular arcade games that have outsold all other baseball simulations. *HardBall III (HB3)* has pioneered new features unique to this game as well as adding more of the managing and statistical options that serious baseball buffs have come to expect.

HardBall III looks like another winner. While a few bugs mask its true potential like opening-day jitters, *HB3* radiates infectious enthusiasm for the game of baseball. Much more than an arcade game, it is a comprehensive baseball environment greater than the sum of its parts. Though it does not have all the statistical features of the original *Earl Weaver Baseball* and *Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball*, its playing environment is more visually appealing than either of theirs. User-friendly screens offer considerable control over the makeup of players, teams and leagues, and the flow of the game on the field. Printing is easy to printer or disk file. *HB3* can import teams from *EWB2* and *TLRUB*, and serious gamers may find guilty pleasure in bringing their favorite teams over into *HB3* — sacrificing some statistical accuracy and reporting options for the visceral delights of the summer game as it is recreated in *HB3*.

In two-player games, two gamers with unequal abilities can adjust the variables for handicapping. One can control fielding, for example, or let fielders catch the ball and control only the base to which they throw. On-screen players can perform according to their stored statistics or they can all be set to perform at the same level. During the game one can make substitutions at any time. The control that is supposed to turn the designated hitter on and off did not work on my review copy. When this problem is fixed and the designated hitter is turned off, the pitcher will be put in his lineup slot, but can then be moved to whatever spot the gamer prefers.

The arcade mode is up to the *HardBall* standard, well-designed and playable. It doesn't make sense to play without a joystick, though keyboard is supported. Each pitcher has a particular repertoire of pitches and, on the mound one controls pitch choice and, through slight movements of the joystick, pitch location. As in the real game of baseball, one can't win without being able to vary one's pitches, keep the ball low and hit the corners consistently. At bat one can choose to bunt, make contact or go for power, and can dictate hit-and-run, steals and squeeze plays. When batting one uses the joystick to make contact with pitches that are on the corners and not coming across the center of the plate.

Michaels at the Mike

HB3 inaugurates features that may become mandatory in baseball simulations as computer power increases. The game requires 640K, EGA and a hard disk and needs at least an AT-class machine, but it makes glorious use of VGA, sound board support, extra RAM and faster processing speeds. For the first time, we can see close plays through a closeup window that opens to show the action in detail. We can save any play on a "highlight film" reel to be replayed at any time and gamers with two megabytes of RAM on their machines can hear the distinctive voice of Al Michaels doing a "live" (digitized) play-by-play. The announcer, as other sound features in the game, can be toggled on and off. Michaels' play-by-play announcing is an interesting novelty that may eventually become tiresome. His separately-recorded words are strung together as the situation dictates, resulting in somewhat choppy repetitious sentences. He does not try to pronounce players' names but identifies them by uniform number and position. I found it distracting and intimidating to hear that familiar voice describing my sometimes inept efforts at the plate, but others may find this touch of realism the most exciting feature of HB3.

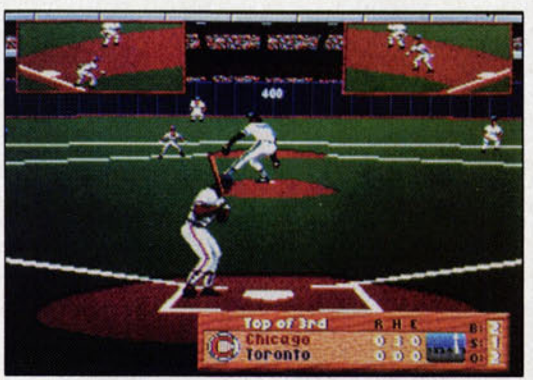
In line with its arcade roots, *HB3* is not fully responsive to the desires of gamers more interested in managing and strategy. Games take longer than manage-only fans prefer. When managing, one is still forced to play the game pitch-by-pitch and cannot adopt a speedier one-pitch-per-batter mode, and must press a key before every single pitch.

Take Me Out to the HardBall Park

The ballparks in *HB3* are a sheer delight. The game provides eight beautifully-rendered current major league parks, old favorites like Wrigley and Fenway and newer parks like the Skydome. An additional disk with the remaining eighteen current parks is promised. The VGA ballparks are worth the cost of a new monitor (on EGA the "green monster" at Fenway is gray!) and the ballparks are certainly more accurate and more appealing than those in *EWB2*. While they are not as detailed as in *TLRUB*, we can see more of each park from our vantage point in *HB3* than we can in *TLRUB*. The tradeoff for *HB3's* greater depth of field is that the players are not as detailed and lifelike as those in *TLRUB*. Fortunately, they are more attractive than the caricatures in *EWB2*. Also, the views of the park we get as the game progresses represent an intelligent compromise between the single scrolling camera of *TLRUB*, great for detail but somewhat claustrophobic

and slow, and the jerky quick-cutting cameras of *EWB2* that break-up the flow of the action.

There are convenient control centers for modifying team and player data. One can change the uniform colors, home stadium, default lineup and pitching rotation of each team, as in other games, but can also design a custom logo for the team (with a little paint program supplied), designate the team's "star player," and store a brief text about the team that is displayed alongside the star player's profile whenever the team is selected for a game. One can also designate who "owns" the team; when a team is owned its games will be flagged by the computer during season replays to be played out in detail.



The player data screen shows base-season data and ratings for that player as well as statistics accumulated during the current replayed season if there is one in progress (not as much data as is stored in *EWB2* or *TLRUB*, though). One can select the specialty pitches of each pitcher in priority order. One can also choose a picture of the player or choose to have no picture at all, preferable when dealing with the statistics of real major league players.

Trading players between rosters or cloning players onto new rosters is somewhat complicated. Like *TLRUB* and unlike *EWB2*, there must always be 26 fully-stocked teams in the active database. New teams are created by copying a team to a different set of leagues or a set of leagues to a new file and writing over the players. Players can be exported one at a time and stored on separate files, then imported onto different rosters. If a player is imported onto a roster slot, the previous occupant of that slot is gone (unless he has previously been copied or exported). This means that a simple one-for-one trade requires two exports followed by two imports, with the gamer switching back and forth between the two teams in between. Some gamers may find it preferable to create and modify their rosters under *EWB2's* more flexible rules and simply import the finished rosters into *HB3*.



Play the Whole Season

Like its main competitors *HB3* can be played in "league" or "exhibition" mode, and league games can be played out by human or computer opponents. The computer can replay a full season in a matter of hours, more quickly than *EWB2* but not as speedily as *TLRUB*. However, it will not do so unattended. It plays out a week's games at a time (it took about twenty-five minutes to play each week on my 16MHz 386SX), and, annoyingly, has to be prompted to go on to the next week. Standings and player performance figures can be checked at any time and a sketchy box score is available at the end of any game that has been played out in full.

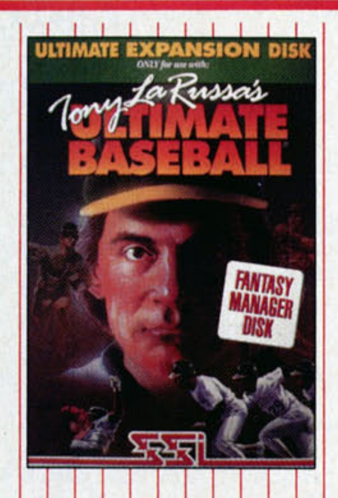
As first released, the *HB3* utility for replaying a complete season is so rudimentary it includes relief pitching, but no other substitutions. In one season replay, not one of the six or seven reserve players on any roster got so much as a single at-bat in an entire computer-managed season replay. Accolade states that this will be corrected. Also, since only one roster is stored for each team, there will be no way to platoon a player to strictly play against left-handed pitchers. Injuries, also, do not play a part in this simulation. The season replay module does include a clever innovation where the replay stops halfway through the season and selects all-star rosters for each league, based on the best cumulative performances in that season. One can play out the all-star game or watch the computer do so.

B. Y. O. Players

HB3 provides twenty-six rosters of pseudonymed players and avoids the licensing costs associated with real player statistics by allowing people to convert their *EWB2* and *TLRUB* player disks into *HB3* format. This is a wise step and, I hope, a harbinger of greater standardization in this industry. It encourages people to try out *HB3*, since there's no need to enter player statistics, make a large new investment in player disks or find lots of additional space on one's hard disk. *HB3* has a less complex database than either of its competitors and does not need all the data elements they save. It would be nice to have this utility expanded to allow *HB3* to import from *Duerk's Electronic Baseball Encyclopedia* for past years' performances or the STATS on-line service for current player data.

HB3 rosters must contain ten pitchers and fifteen position players. The game can easily access any number of different sets of leagues and rosters. The importing process is well-designed and goes very smoothly, but there are pitfalls. The utility cannot handle three-barrelled names like Oil Can Boyd or players with middle initials. Fortunately, the *HB3* utility imports the ten pitchers and fifteen position players on the twenty-five-man *TLRUB* rosters, while ignoring the five reserve players. I could not import teams from the *TLRUB* Great Teams 1901-68 disk, though I had no trouble importing the teams supplied with *TLRUB* and those on their 1990 stats disk. Also, *HB3* will import teams from *EWB2* but not from earlier versions of *EWB*. *EWB2* teams should be checked prior to importing to be sure they have exactly ten pitchers and fifteen position players on the active roster. If not, *HB3* will lose a player and not be able to find the tenth pitcher or fifteenth position player. *HB3* does *not* recognize the starting pitchers from *EWB2* disks, however.

HardBall III packs more features in a single box than any of its competitors. Gamers looking for eyepopping graphics and an excellent arcade mode, but a less than state-of-the-art statistical and reporting capability, will find this an excellent choice, preferable to *Bo Jackson Baseball*. It gives younger fans a taste of the world of baseball strategy and statistics. Those not interested in an arcade mode may also consider waiting to see what the on-deck batter, MicroLeague Baseball 4 (not available as of this writing) has to offer. CGW



TITLE: Ultimate Baseball Expansion Disks
SYSTEMS: IBM
OF PLAYERS: 1-2 and league play
PRICE: $ Expansion Disks, $19.95 and $14.95; see review for details. Available in 5.25" or 3.5" format; some 5.25 disks are high density. Requires Tony La Russa's Ultimate Baseball and a hard disk.
COPY PROTECT: Document lookup in basic game, nothing on these disks
DESIGNER: Beyond Software
PUBLISHER: Strategic Simulations

Not *Yet* The Ultimate

SSI's Expansion Disks for "Tony La Russa's Ultimate Baseball"

by Win Rogers

With a variety of expansion disks now available, *Tony La Russa's Ultimate Baseball* comes closer to living up to its immodest title. Many fans will want to know how close the enhancements bring *TLRUB* to the standard set by the original *Earl Weaver Baseball*. These add-ons improve on a fine product, but will, in this reviewer's opinion, leave *TLRUB* fans frustrated that the game still falls short of its potential.

There have been additions, deletions, and repackaging since add-on disks were announced during *TLRUB's* debut of last year. At $19.95 each, SSI offers the *Fantasy Manager* utility disk; two disks with the 1990 and 1991 player statistics from the Major League Baseball Players' Association; a collection of *Great Teams 1901-68* (such as the 1934 Gashouse Gang Cardinals and the 1961 Mantle-and-Maris Yankees); and two collections of classic and current stadiums, one each for the American and National League. Note that "current" means as of 1991; it includes the new Comiskey Park but not the even newer Oriole Park at Camden Yards. Purists will want to make a switch when playing the 1990 season, when the White Sox were still in the old Comiskey Park, which is included among the classic parks. The 1990 and 1991 player disks are also available in Commodore 64 format. All of the above should be available from software retailers.

At $14.95, and available only from Strategic Simulations, are three stadium disks released earlier. They include the same parks in a different packaging: the fourteen current American League stadiums; the twelve current National League stadiums and eleven classic parks (such as Ebbets Field and the Polo Grounds). A previously-announced disk of great teams from 1969-89 has been cancelled.

Managing The Fantasy

Every enthusiastic *TLRUB* fan will want the *Fantasy Manager* disk. In addition to adding fantasy league drafting capabilities it improves the basic game in some of the ways which were called for when *TLRUB* was reviewed in *CGW* #88. After loading the *Fantasy Manager* disk, one is no longer limited in using the designated hitter. Any league can be a designated hitter or non-designated hitter league. VGA users can customize uniform colors for any team over the whole 256-color range through palette bars such as one would find in a paint program. Serious baseball history buffs will open up *Okkonen's Baseball Uniforms of the 20th Century* to match the color schemes of the classic teams of the past. Unfortunately, Yankee pinstripes are not available.

If one has added stadium disks, the disk provides a new menu to change the home stadium to which any team is assigned. (This menu did not work on some early copies of the disk, so any gamers so affected should contact SSI for an upgrade or information on how to download the missing file.) Trading players has been made somewhat more flexible, though one is still constrained by the need to have exactly twelve pitchers and eighteen position players on each roster at all times. During the drafting process, one can trade draft slots for actual players.

Further, printing capabilities (missing in the original program) are improved by loading the *Fantasy Manager* module. On screens that contain data, not graphics, hitting F10 is supposed to send a screen dump to the printer and hitting F9 is supposed to add the contents of the screen to a PRINT.TXT file in the game directory. Therefore, one can get printouts of rosters, standings, player statistics, and league leaders. Additional F9 commands add more text at the end of PRINT.TXT, which can later be edited in a word processor. It may require tinkering with the printer settings to take advantage of the F10 command. I tested the routine on two different printers. On an IBM Proprinter the feed to the printer did not include the carriage returns that the printer wanted, so the columns did not line up properly. On an HP Laserjet III, the command produced only blank sheets of paper.

Feel Like A Draft?

While it will replay an entire major league season in awesome speed (in an hour or two on a fast computer, not a day or two like *EWB2*), *TLRUB* does not seem well suited for fantasy league play. Its league-play utilities always involve all twenty-six teams, and few fantasy leagues are that large. The Fantasy Manager disk adds drafting capabilities, and while it does not improve the league-play capabilities of *TLRUB*, it gets around their limitations in an interesting way.

On draft day, after it is determined how many human general managers will be in the league, one can configure the computerized general managers of the remainder of the teams. As the draft proceeds, the computer-managed teams will take their turns, putting together rosters with the personalities they have been programmed to develop. They can go primarily for power, pitching, speed, defense or for a custom weighting of various team strengths (to tailor a team for a particular home park). Note that while their artificial intelligence will work for drafting, they will stupidly agree to any trade faster than that early opponent in that public domain *Monopoly* game *circa* five years ago. No real-life manager should be permitted to trade with a computer-managed team without the consent of the other team owners.

Reading the information about "computer manager personalities" on the *Fantasy Manager* package might lead one to think that the game includes the equivalent of *EWB2's* manager profiles. *TLRUB's* programmable manager profiles are *only* for drafting, not for playing baseball. In the game itself, the computer manager al-

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ways plays by the same algorithms. However, having computer-drafted teams with distinct personalities adds excitement and strategic challenge to the season replay.

There is a screen for editing draft rules such as the draft order, salary cap and salary basis (rotisserie-style or "real world"). Both sets of salary figures are available in the data base and can be altered. One can exclude or include any divisions from the draft, but if a division *isn't* in the draft, its *players* are not available either. After the draft is over, it is wise to check each roster to be sure that the twenty-five strongest players are indeed on the active roster, and the others on the reserve list.

Whether or not this module is used to run a fantasy league, it is an enjoyable learning tool, since one can replay a whole season in an hour or two and see the results of one's drafting decisions. I enjoyed watching my hand-picked Boston Red Sox team win a divisional title for a simulated season in which all the other teams in the division had been programmed to draft for power.

Putting TLRUB to the Test

With the release of the 1990 season stats, it is finally possible to put the *TLRUB* simulation through its paces and see how realistically it can recreate an actual season. (The 1991 season disk was not available at press time.) As mentioned above, the replay module is awesomely fast, but it also turns out to be remarkably effective at matching real-life results. One cannot alter the pre-programmed season but can select any games to watch or to play out and can stop the simulation to check rosters and league leaders. While the replays are going forward one can follow the pennant races by watching the league standings changing day by day.

In a 1990 season replay, Oakland and Cincinnati won their divisions as they did in real life. In the American League East, Toronto shaded Boston, as many had expected that they would. The National League East race was very close, with Pittsburgh, the real-world winner, finishing fourth, but only two games behind a first-place tie between the Mets and the Cubs. The real-world winners topped many of the simulated league's leader lists (Cecil Fielder in home runs, Rickey Henderson and Vince Coleman in stolen bases, Nolan Ryan and David Cone in strikeouts, for example), and the frequency of runs, stolen bases, strikeouts, etc., were very credible — amazing for a one-hour simulation.

Gamers should be warned that all MLBPA player stat disks are not created equal. The *TLRUB* disk has dozens of no-names — players identified only by a tag such as "spot starter," "closer," or "util. inf." The missing players are no longer in the major leagues, since they were marginal 1990 rookies or retirees like Frank White, Keith Hernandez, and Bill Buckner. In this era of big money for sports licensing, SSI apparently feared suits by players no longer represented by the MLBPA, and left off their names. The buyer of this disk pays the price. After buying a disk of "real" player stats, the gamer still has to spend hours looking up complete 1990 team records to insert the real names of these marginal players to get complete rosters. There is no warning of this problem on the disk or the publicity from SSI, so it comes as an unpleasant surprise. It is not known whether the same problem will exist on the 1991 season disk.

Gamers should also be aware that the full season records of a player who changed teams during the season are given to one of those teams. This detracts from the realism of simulated replays.

Improving the View

If one has space on one's hard disk, the stadium disks make a welcome visual enhancement to *TLRUB*. Unfortunately, there is no gain in statistical realism with the current stadium disks, since the original game is programmed with the home park characteristics of each team. Fortunately, the "classic" parks not only show each park's appearance, but also affect recreated games in accordance with the physical characteristics of each park.

The classic stadiums should make a nice match with the disk of classic teams 1901-68, but the two releases are not coordinated as well as they should be. Of the eleven classic parks, only seven are matched with teams that called them home. There are no teams provided that used the L.A. Coliseum, Baker Bowl, Griffith Stadium, or Crosley Field. Of the twenty-six classic teams, nine played in parks that are still in use, fourteen called one of the classic parks home, and three have no natural home: the 1906 Cubs, the 1909 Tigers, and the 1965 Twins. All these parks, whether classic or current, changed their appearance and dimensions through the years; today's Fenway Park doesn't suit the 1915 Red Sox, and the Shibe Park recreation that looks so great for the 1911 A's doesn't fit the 1929 A's. More classic team and stadium disks would be welcome. Incidentally, the packaging is inaccurate about the contents of the Classic Teams 1901-68 disk: instead of the 1969 Orioles, the disk contains the 1953 Yankees, one of four Yankee teams provided.

As opposed to the original *Earl Weaver Baseball*, the handling of multiple sets of leagues is very cumbersome in TLRUB. In the latter, only one set of leagues can be active at a given time. To make a different set active, one must overwrite the other files. This calls for excessive care in managing files in separate subdirectories. Also, there is no way to "clone" individual players onto blank rosters and it is nearly impossible to combine players from different sets of rosters in new configurations.

The data card warns about the importance of going to the "start new season" menu after changing teams, but even with the best of care one can still find that the titles of teams do not match the players or they are assigned to the wrong stadiums. In testing out these disks I had to start from scratch more than once and reinstall the whole program. There's room for much improvement here.

Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball is such an attractive baseball simulation that I am frustrated by these enhancement disks. They bring improvements such as new drafting capabilities and beautiful stadium recreations, but they bring new headaches as well, with the cumbersome printing and file-handling procedures, nameless players on the rosters, and so forth. *TLRUB* may be a bit closer to the "ultimate" with these disks, but it's not there yet. CGW

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MEGATECH



Last issue, *CGW* offered solutions to Levels 1-15 of the Taxing Levels. This issue, we continue our explorations of one of the more difficult sections of the original hit.

Taxing 16: Mary Poppins' Land — HMDHFINMGL

Make floaters of the first two Lems out of the chute, then make the third a blocker on the right. Let #1 walk over the tall barrier, but have #2 build when he is a little over half way up the incline. This will turn him back. Now, let him walk down to about the halfway point and build back toward the entrance chute. Let #1 walk to and build against the slight step-up at the right side of the "pool." When he turns to the left, he must build up to the barrier. When both bridges are completed (or within a few planks of completion), detonate the blocker and send the rabble to the great furry beyond.

Taxing 17: Marks the Spot — MDHFAJLNGU

The Lems will be going to the left on this one, but first they will have to build to the right. Order the first Lem out to mine and then have the next couple of Lems behind him build stairs to slow them down. When the miner is deep enough to turn the others, make him build. Have a Lem who has been all the way to the left and is returning right, take about 2 steps on the level surface and begin to build. When his stairway has taken him beyond the chute, have a Lem bash the bridge to keep any curious little ones from following. Keep on building up until the bridge reaches the right-hand corner of the gap in the overhead surface. As he is about to complete his bridge, start clicking rapidly in order to be certain that your next build to the left starts as high as possible on the first bridge. Once the bridge to the left is completed, you need to build back to the right and again to the left but, THIS IS IMPORTANT, adjust these builds to be certain that the last build finishes almost at "Lem height" from the ceiling. Do that and all your troubles for this level are over (almost). Any lower, and you will find your little friend getting into all sorts of trouble. Now that the bridge is complete and he is walking back and forth, let him begin to bash to the left and the exit. There should be NO brick over his head as he bashes. When he is an inch or two from breaking into the chamber to the right of the exit, go back and repair the bridge. When he does break out, catch him QUICKLY as he drops to the slanted brick just under his feet and make him build to the other side. That done, bash on into the exit.

Taxing 18: Tribute to M. C. Escher — DHFIJLMOGN

Have the first Lem out walk to the wall and build when he is at the very center of the blue block next to the one-way structure. (You want his bridge to finish at a point no more than "Lem high.") Now, THIS IS IMPORTANT! Catch him as soon as he turns and let him build back to the left. When he is about 2/3 of the way to the left wall, select a Lem who is walking left and is approximately under the builder. Make that Lem a bomber. He will walk up on the bridge before he detonates, keeping the others out of the builder's way. As the builder nears the left wall, click rapidly on the mouse button. It will ensure that he builds from as high to the left as possible. You need to do that so his stairs will take him above the entry point under the chute. Once the builder reaches the one-way structure, let him step off (be sure he is a floater) and follow him until he is about 5 or 6 steps short of the exit. Let him build over the exit and seal against the right wall in order to turn him back. Let him bash when he reaches the wall of the one-way structure. When he breaks out on the other side, he will bash through the short bridge and free the others. Make the lead Lem out a bomber when he is two full blue blocks out from under the one-way structure. He will walk up the bridge over the exit and detonate, making it possible for the others to get home in time for lunch.

Taxing 19 — Bomboozal - HFANLMDPGK

All you have to work with in this one are walking bombers. It's a special mission which demands the use of only highly qualified and motivated troops. For that reason, I have selected the 503rd Female Kamikaze platoon, a unit of the battle tested 75th Lem-

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Circle Reader Service #100



ming Combat Ordnance Battalion. Use these people properly and they will get the job done for you on the first attempt. (Which is good, because very few of the Kamikaze types seem to reach retirement age.) Make Lem #1 into a bomber when she is directly over the left edge of the first fireplace. Allow #2 to pass and activate #3 when she is directly over the right edge of the same fireplace. When the second bomber detonates, she will create an opening into a center compartment. The strategy here is to keep the Lems in fire free compartments at all times. Allow the first right moving Lem in that compartment to reach a point that is directly over the left edge of the fire below, and then make her into a bomber. She will courageously blast into another "safe" room. Go back on top and make a bomber of a Lem who is directly over the right wall of the first room the Lems walked over. With her demise, the Lems will have access to the last safe room, down on the right-hand side. Now catch a right moving Lem as she is over the left edge of that fireplace. She will go to the right wall, detonate and earn her posthumous Medal of Honor. Your unit has made it out with a minimum loss of life and lem. You should be proud of them.

Taxing 20: Walk the Web Rope — FINLMDHQGT

This one should have been called "Helter Skelter." It's one of several to which there is no clear or clean way to do it. While there is no solution, there is a strategy. I do this one in the following manner. Place a blocker at the very bottom and proceed to use all your climbers. You don't need to worry, they aren't going anywhere. As they begin to climb all over the web, start clicking on them in an attempt to clear a path up through the web and out over the long "tightrope." In some cases you can bash, others you can mine (if the climber is walking downhill). If you cut through where you don't want to go, then bridge over it. Once you have the path cleared, let one of the climbers go to the far end and up the other web. Don't worry, this one is easy. Let him walk up and bash the First section of the web. Continue to do that until you have a path cleared to the exit. Now, go back and remove the last obstacles from the path of the other Lems. You can mine (downhill) or bash to eliminate the strands of web which may remain. I would not mine the very last strand, (the one holding the Lems in). For some reason, when I mined that one, he went on through and spilled all my little friends. Once you break that last strand, then all you need to do is give them the time to get to the exit. Look to the top of the screen. At times, a climber will get caught up there. You can free him by having him mine or dig. This one gets my vote for the one level I would like to "86". And to the sadist who designed this one, this message.....may your favorite daughter become a willing love slave to the unwashed, illiterate and illegitimate son of a highly disreputable used camel dealer on the outskirts of Bag Dad.

Taxing 21: Feel the heat! — FAJHLFHBHW

Make the first lemming into a climber. When he is just past the center of the steel plate above the flame thrower, have him build. When he has laid about 8 planks, then go make another climber as he comes out of the chute. Let the second climber mine *just short* of the steel plate and, when he turns, *instantly* mine again. When your builder starts his third bridge, you can forget him and watch the miner. If he does not stop mining, then make him bash. Now, have a cool one...

Taxing 22: Come on over to my place — IJHLFHFCHP

There are a number of ways to do this one. The way to get it over the quickest is to make floaters of the first two Lems out. Ignore Lem #2 and have #1 begin to dig at the end of the floor section just before the exit. When he is about knee deep, make him build to turn him back to the left. When he steps up out of his hole, make him build. Continue building until the bridge begins to save the falling Lems. Let him step off and walk left to the end and then build to the far wall. This will turn him so that he can add to your tally of lemmings.

Taxing 23: King of the Castle — NHLFHFADHM

This level is easy if you know how to overcome it. Build across the gap and have other Lems build behind #1 just to slow them down. When the first Lem drops over on the other side, let him take a couple of steps and build stairs. Let the second one over build right behind the first, and have the third build right behind the second. All bridges *must* start *on the floor* and must *touch one another.* It's easy. After the third bridge is started, catch a right moving Lem and have him build up to the next level. From this point on, it's all gravy. You can save 100% with this technique if you want, or let one or two die falling off the first bridge to save builders if you like (an ethical delimma left to the judgement of the player).



Taxing 24: Take a Running Jump — HLFHFINEHV

Make builders of the second through fifth Lems out of the chute. This will slow them down while #1 goes to prepare a safe route ahead. Let him build across the gap which is located over the exit. Take this opportunity to pause the game and step up the flow to 99. Let the first Lem to step off the bridge continue while

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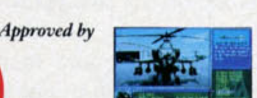
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you again build to slow down 2 to 4 of those who follow. When your lead Lem has reached the tiny crack between the blocks which angle down from up above, have him build. The object is to seal off that crack and prevent him, or any other Lem, from walking through it. If he seals off the crack but manages to step on through, then catch him as he goes across the top and have him build from the edge, back in the direction from which they all came. Once he gets down on the other side, reverse him by having him build under one of the bridges left by the others. Down below, all you need to do is have the first Lem who turns back to the left, drop down on the lower link of the chain and build to the exit. Mission complete.

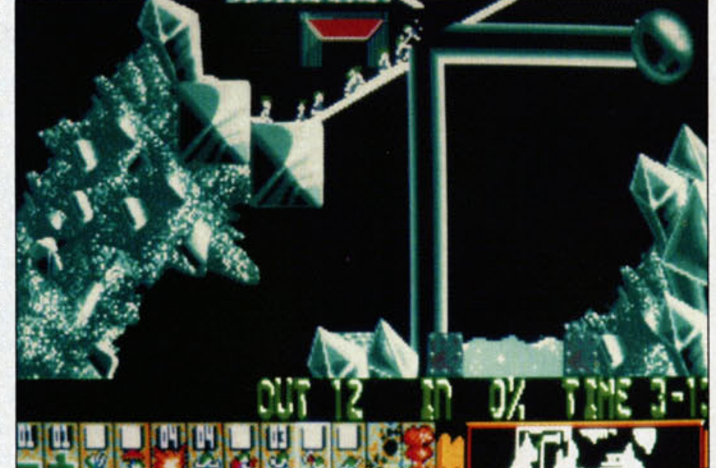


Taxing 25: Follow the Leader — LFHFAJLFHO

After the first four or five little souls are out, step up the flow to 99. After the lead lem has walked beyond the depression between the first two "solid" mounds, have Lem #2 bash while he is at the lowest point. Catch the first Lem to walk back to the left and have him bash also. This will create a "holding pen" in which to store the little buggers while Lem #1 builds to the exit (make the pen fairly long before you build to stop each of the bashers). Let Lem #1 build from a point a little beyond the half-way mark on the last mound. When it become obvious that he has begun his last bridge, go back and have a Lem in the holding pen bash to the right. The completion of his job marks the completion of yours.

Taxing 26: Triple Trouble — FHFIJLLGHX

There are several way to play this one, all variations on a single theme. This is the way I prefer. Catch #1 over the "doughnut" and let him take about two steps and dig. Go down to the right and catch a Lem just as he hits the corner and the INSTANT he turns, make him build. Do the same on the left side. Go back to the right and make a climber. Let this climber get up on the deck and take two short steps before you make him build. If your timing is just right, his bridge will make contact with the "doughnut" before he turns back. If not, you can complete it on his return trip. Let a Lem in the "doughnut" take a few steps up the side and make him mine. If you pick your spot just right, he will come out where your builder left off. Go back and restart the bridge in the right pit. Restart the bridge in the left pit and as soon as you are past the point where new Lems are dropping, pick a little guy you can trust and have him mine through the bridge. This can be a bit tough because of the crowd, but not that tough. Let your builder build into the "doughnut" and then repair the broken bridge. Single out one Lem and have him bash. As soon as he breaks into daylight, have him build in order to stop him. This should give you 100% and a small round of applause from a large pack of lemmings.



Taxing 27: Call in the bomb squad — LGAOLLFHHK

This one is really very straightforward. Except for the fact that you have to blow away too many of your little friends, there's not much to it. Put a blocker on each side of the structure to prevent "walk aways" and then, build a stairway from the right top edge toward the left. Build to the overhead until the builder quits, then make a blocker at the top of the bridge. THIS IS IMPORTANT *Do not, I say again, do not* try to use the builder as a blocker. You can be much more precise by allowing some other Lem to walk to the top and block. Place him as high as you can, then detonate him. Repeat the process, building as required to get higher and higher into the overhead. When you do break out, if you are lucky, they will go to the right. If not, then place a blocker to the left, then build back over the gap to the exit. If you must place the blocker to the left, allow him take about three steps first or the bridge back to the right may block others who are trying to climb up out of the hole.

Taxing 28: Poor Wee Creatures — FINLLFHIHN

Make Lem #1 an athlete and, when he is under the overhang on the upper horizontal bar, let him build some stairs. This will turn him around. Let him then build to the ledge over the chute and walk off the ledge to the block below. Turn him to the right by having him build into the left block, then make him build at the far right. He will build to the pole and turn back to the left. Turn him back to the right by building against the block on the left. He will go up his bridge and climb up to where he first built. Let him get to the top of that bridge and build again, turning him to the left. Pick your spot and mine down to the top of the bridge under the chute to release the others. When he does break through, don't forget about him. You will *need* him. Turn him back by building as you did before. When the Lems drop down to the lower level, have one bash to the right. Make the first little guy to the trap a blocker just in front of it and then detonate him. Have the first

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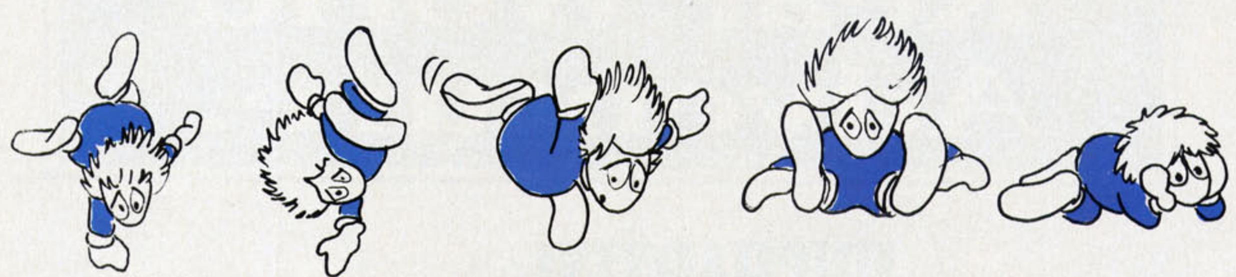




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Circle Reader Service #71



Lem to drop into the hole left by the suicidal Lem bash under the trap such that the rest will follow him under the trap and out to the exit. That should just about do it for level 28.

Taxing 29: How do I dig up the way — IFANLLFHJX

Make the first three Lems dig *instantly* and you should have two who get by. Make them floaters and go back and make a blocker of the first Lem to walk to the left. When your floaters are down on the log bridge, make the trailing Lem build to slow him down and have the lead Lem build from the edge of the gap to the other side. Have one Lem build a short bridge up to the side of the cliff (I'll explain later) and have the other go back and build up to their bridge over the gap in the logs. This will leave you with a bridge in the shape of an inverted V, which will allow the others to run back and forth in safety. Make the first Lem back to the cliff wall into a climber and when he is just short of the exit, have him dig about waist deep, then build. When he turns, have him mine. When he is on level with the top of the short bridge, change him into a basher. The short bridge gives you more control than you would have if you tried to make the mine come out in exactly the right place.

Taxing 30: We all fall down — FINLLFIIJQ

Don't be misled by the fact that the flow for this one is set to one. Try it that way and you will just waste your time. Quickly move to set the flow to 70-75. Allow the leader to get all the way to the end and make him dig. Let each Lem to follow slightly overlap the Lem ahead of him and dig. This would be just about impossible without the F11 (pause) key, but because you can use the F11, you can control the action very easily. If you have really great hand to eye coordination, go ahead and do it without the F-key. CGW



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Circle Reader Service #59

Getting Mellow in the City of Big Shoulders

by Sara Reeder

Being a native Californian (which is strange enough: at last count, I think there were exactly nine of us in the entire state), I fell subject to an odd sort of vertigo, a sense of being off-world and out of sorts, when I came east for the Chicago CES in June. The January show in Vegas isn't that hard to handle: hey, I've lived in Hollywood and San Francisco, and I know from weird. (Anyone who saw that picture of me in last month's issue won't dispute this.) But get me east of the Continental Divide, and I can't shake the nagging feeling that I'm not in Oz anymore. No matter how many times I clicked the heels of my red cowboy boots together, it still wasn't like home . . .

Maybe it's the fact that the ground doesn't abruptly rearrange itself every month or so. Or it's all those people actually smoking in *public* places — an act that can get you banished to the Nether Regions (or, at least, Orange County) back home. Nevertheless, wandering into McCormick Place, home of the Summer CES, is tantamount to turning the gain knob on the whole strange trip all the way up to ten — and leaving it there for four days.

To fully appreciate the surreality of the situation, you need to understand that, in addition to the colossal Sega and Nintendo booths (both of which occupy about ten city blocks, eat up enough power to dim lights all the way to Milwaukee, and put enough sound out of their mammoth speakers to make the floor thrum and resonate quite reassuringly), CES is also the "must-go" show for folks who make car burglar alarms and the X-rated videos you see down at the local video rental shop. So, for the past few CESs, as the edutainment revolution kick-started to life and took off, the usual cognitive dissonance that afflicts me the moment I step off the plane has become damn near mind-bending. On your left, ladies and gentlemen: armed-to-the-gunwales Ferraris and the stripped-to-the-navel porn queens. On your right, *SimLife*, *Reader Rabbit 2*, and *Just Grandma and Me.*

A Child's Garden of Greenware

The "greenware" trend first noted in these pages two months ago is fast evolving into a diverse and rampant rain forest. In addition to *SimLife*, which looks very lifelike indeed, and which **Maxis** swears will ship for the Mac this summer (DOS and Windows to follow), we were much taken with the preview of **Davidson's** *Zoo Keeper*, which puts elementary and middle-schoolers in charge of a 50-animal zoo. Between keeping all the animals fed and healthy, ensuring that their habitats are comfortable for them, and staving off "troublemakers" (little anthropomorphs that represent human behaviors that work against animal survival), it looks like it should be complex and engaging. The graphics also cut some new ground — they're a nice blending of digitized photos of the animals and their habitats (provided by Jack Hanna of the popular *ZooLife* TV show), and hand-drawn animations. The icon-based interface promises to make it fairly easy to play, and the game currently includes an on-line info directory of American zoos, to encourage kids to think about getting involved.

The many fans of Zug the talking Megasaurus will be pleased to learn that **Davidson** is giving him his own software line. In addition to *EcoSaurus* (now retitled *Zug's Adventures on Eco Island*) and *Zug's Spelling Adventures*, the line includes two new titles: *Zug's Race Through Space* and *Zug's Dinosaur World. Race Through Space* exposes 5-12 year-olds to the basics of the solar system; *Dinosaur World* appeals to 3-8 year-olds who are mired in the ever-popular (and seemingly never-ending) dinosaur phase. You should start seeing Zugware stomping the shelves this fall.

Even though Maxis appears to have *SimLife* just about in the can, they were a bit shy about pegging a launch date for *El-Fish* — a sort of SimAquarium that picks up where the famous *After Dark* fish screen-saver left off. Too bad: there are a lot of parents out there who would love to give their kids a pet for Christmas. . .especially if they were offered one that you don't have to feed, walk, housebreak, sleep with, clean up after, or flush down the toilet when it dies.

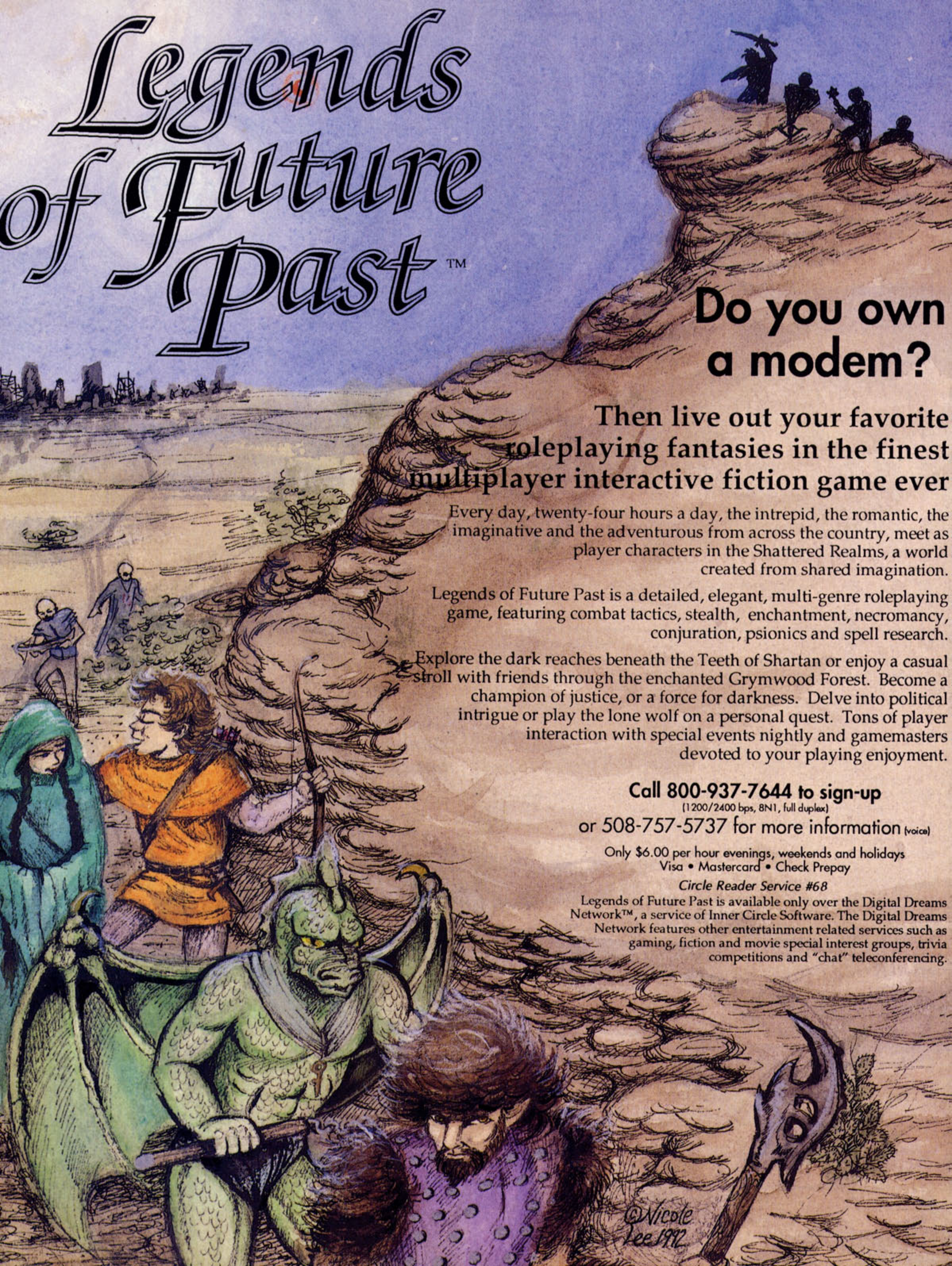
Let's Do The Time Warp Again

Based on the surging wave of history and geography products coming down the pipeline, someone — like maybe me — should actually spend some time writing an in-depth column about the genre. (Hmm. Watch this space.) After all, **Broderbund** and **Electronic Arts** are bringing *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?* to the Sega Genesis in the next few months (*gasp!* Edutainment on a cartridge machine?). And **Davidson** released the Mac version *Headline Harry and the Great Newspaper Race*, which includes QuickTime video movies, and some sound and graphics improvements over the DOS version. Looking farther ahead, **Sierra On-Line** is also developing a history game of its own, to be titled *Twisted History*. More about this after the January show.

The entire CGW crew was deeply impressed by *Shadow President: The Simulation of Presidential World Power.* Robin Antonick, who programmed *John Madden Football* for **Electronic Arts**, is the designer of this combination fantasy role-playing game/political simulation that has impressive potential as a learning tool for high school and college students. A deft and intricate weaving of economics, politics, foreign relations, defense issues, and ecology, the game includes instant on-line access to the CIA World Factbook, with in-depth info on over 150 countries. Everything about the beta version we saw looked cutting-edge. But enough said — given the enthusiasm of the CGW editorial staff, it's a sure bet you'll see an in-depth review of it on these pages very soon.

Classics, Revisited

Both **Davidson** and **The Learning Company** announced new,


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Legends of Future Past is available only over the Digital Dreams Network™, a service of Inner Circle Software. The Digital Dreams Network features other entertainment related services such as gaming, fiction and movie special interest groups, trivia competitions and "chat" teleconferencing.
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improved, updated, upgraded, or otherwise enhanced versions of existing kids' classics. **Davidson** showed the next version of *KidWorks 2*, their best-selling Macintosh art program. The new revision includes a reworked interface, some new tools, a major revamping of the sound output system, and — best of all — support for color Macs. *KidWorks 2*, along with the Windows version of *New Math Blaster Plus*, should be in the stores by the time you read this. **The Learning Company** introduced the next extension in their Reader Rabbit line — *Reader Rabbit's Ready for Letters*, a reading-readiness program with five charming modules that drill kids on matching, shape recognition, and basic word skills. They're aiming it at 4-7 year-olds, but it's the kind of thing that even bright 2- and 3-year-olds might get a kick out of.

In Other News...

At the **Konami** booth, the big editorial news was that **Park Place Productions**, the San Diego-based company best known for *Draft & Print* and dozens of cartridge game ports, had transmogrified itself with a new company name. The brilliant red-and-blue **Spirit of Discovery** logo was flying high above two original new education programs due for Christmas release: *Facts in Action*, a fast-moving trivia game designed to introduce players to a wide-ranging collection of culturally important facts and faces; and *The Body Illustrated*, a beautifully detailed anatomy tutorial that will bring back waves of nostalgia (or waves of nausea, for the queasy) to anyone who built a Visible Man model in their younger days. The company intends to create a series of specialized *Facts in Action* data disks for various subjects and age groups. And if *The Body Illustrated* lives up to its promise, it could be the ticket to an easy "A" in anatomy for high school and college students.

MetroGnomes' Music, a new release from **The Learning Company** is cracking open another new genre — music software for primary schoolers. As one who survived a dozen years of music education that was short on play and long on time, effort, guilt, drills, and occasional raps on the knuckles, I'm very enthusiastic about the potential of computers to give my own kids some great musical experiences — without the pain. The product, which just recently shipped, offers five activities geared toward ear training and rhythm development, and helps kids create simple tunes on their own.

What with John Sculley giving *Grandma and Me* demos to any group that will listen, it's no surprise that **Broderbund** is already wrapping up the second entry in their "Living Books" series. *Arthur's Teacher Troubles*, due out this fall and based on the book by Marc Brown, is aimed at a slightly older age group (6-10) than *Grandma*. But, based on the first 12 screens shown at CES, it should prove that *Grandma* was not just a creative fluke, and that Mark Schlicting's development group may have the wit and imagination to keep the magic in the series indefinitely.

Overheard...

Psygnosis is in the early stages of planning a *Lemmings* product specifically aimed at kids. . .and yours truly will be branching out as a contributing editor of *Kids & Computers*, CGW's new sister publication that's due to hit the stands in October. See you there!

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Actual screen photos from the IBM VGA version.

Circle Reader Service #100

Go for the Groats

Genie's *Federation II*

by Johnny L. Wilson

Even though it is only a text game, *Federation II* has become one of those "cyburbs," a conceptual reality or telecommunity where gamers establish a "real" social environment in the midst of an imaginative universe, where I must regularly visit my friends. *Federation II* is, ostensibly, a space trading game. The goal of the game is to advance through the ranks of capitalistic advancement by accumulating Imperial Groats (the game's currency) and Trader Credits (experience points) until one becomes part of the conclave, that exalted tier which contains the six wealthiest players in the Federation. One moves from the interstellar equivalent of "gypsy" trucker to the cosmic cognate of shipping magnate.

To accomplish this stellar feat of status enhancement, the player needs to locate the right office to get a permit to purchase and operate a transport vessel. Luckily for players who download the on-line documentation files, an abbreviated version of *The Idiot's Guide to Federation II*, the docs tell one exactly how to get a permit and how to purchase a ship at the shipyards. Unfortunately, the cosmic capitalist must purchase his/her first vessel by financing the massive expenditure. So, each player starts out heavily in debt and undercapitalized.

As an independent pilot, the player must accept one of three types of jobs to pay off the massive debt owed on his/her initial spaceship. The first type of job simply requires the player pilot to type "Job" at the prompt and Transportation Central (the computer program) will assign a milk run where the player hauls a shipload of ordinary commodities from one planet in the solar system to another. These runs will barely cover the player's fuel expense and, on top of this, the bank slices off 10% of the drayage fees for each load as payment on the player's loan. The milk runs are also only worth one Trader Credit (of which one needs first, hundreds, and then, thousands, to advance through the ranks).

The second type of job involves the SlyNet, an on-line grapevine that regularly updates traders on the "special" jobs available to aggressive pilots. There can only be ten of these



higher paying jobs (in both groats and credits) in play at a time. Alert pilots will get immediately into position to accept these jobs, load the ship immediately and transport quickly to the "pay-off" planet.

Finally, the third type of job is to accept contracts directly from the more experienced players. This is not only beneficial and encouraging to the rookie pilot, but it facilitates the expansion of the veteran trader's empire by allowing him/her to be involved in other jobs, puzzles or investments.

The Real Center of the Federation

Federation II would be relatively entertaining to the novice pilot, even if all he/she were allowed to do was to: a) locate and explore all the planets in the solar system; b) make enough groats to pay off the player's ship; c) solve some of the puzzles on the various planets and d) avoid being shot down by pirates. Nevertheless, the nerve center of the game cannot be found in these activities. While these activities are necessary, the real center of the Federation universe is, as the *Idiot's Guide* notes, Chez Diesel.

Chez Diesel is a bar located on Mars. On any given night, one can plug into Federation space and "hear" (via the computer's monitor) the communications channels filled with invitations to "meet me at CD's." At Chez Diesel, one can gossip; engage in any imaginable action (typing the verb "act," followed by a description of any activity will send said description to all of the assembled characters in a given location); make friends (by typing "Buy round Diesel's Old Peculiar" or whatever libation to which one is inclined); trade information necessary to solve puzzles and consummate deals.

On one night, Chez Diesel was rocked by the most peculiar actions. One Zargleswart, a dapper novice who was obviously looking to fondle a female trader's cargo, decided that a trader named Delta just might be the right target. Now, get the picture...

Zargleswart felt light on his feet, indeed. His baby blue jumpsuit was resplendent in the strobe lights of Chez Diesel and he felt he could dance on the ceiling with his Nike Zero-G Trainers. He threw his flowing Kevlar-lined (bulletproof) cape behind him in a move that would have made Bela Lugosi envious and promptly kissed the first friendly female trader in sight.

Yes, Zargleswart felt very clever as he doffed his virgin white top hat, but stopped short when he observed that everyone was staring at him. In fact, Delta was staring at him. What could possibly be so interesting? Zarg focused

his eyes more carefully upon Delta by typing the "Ex" (Examine) command. Delta was no woman. She wasn't even anyone's wife (if you remember the archaic and sexist joke). In fact, "she" looked decidedly more like Han Solo than Michelle Pfeiffer.

Yes, it is a good thing that Federation space is such a friendly place. Delta shrugged off Zargleswart's first adventure game foray into the gay lifestyle as a symptom of too many Pan Galactic Gargle Blasters and goosed Zarg's bottom in one of those manly, male-bonding sorts of ways that manly men alleged do in athletic locker rooms. Of course, news of such an alternate lifestyle behavior (however ill-informed) was recorded in the *Spynet Journal* (the on-line equivalent of the *Solar System Enquirer*) and both players received quite a bit of razzing in the next few play sessions. It demonstrates how things work in Fed space, though.

Hyperspace, Not Hypertext

Of course, if players simply made trade runs from planet to planet, met at CD's and talked to each other, *Federation II* might not be quite as interesting as it really is. Fortunately, players need to explore the surface of various planets in order to: find objects to give to certain non-player characters in order to solve certain puzzles; locate insurance offices to get re-insured after a painful and ignominious death; imbibe ale or ingest food in order to restore stamina points and upgrade one's ship with the weapons required to waste those interstellar pirates (mostly computer players, but occasionally aggressive humans).

Then, when one reaches the third rank (Adventurer or Adventureuse), one can use the interstellar link and perform hyperjumps to a myriad of additional planetary systems, each with their own distinctive character and many with new puzzles. These new planets are, in turn, owned by high level characters who have earned enough points to be able to design, procure and maintain their own planets.

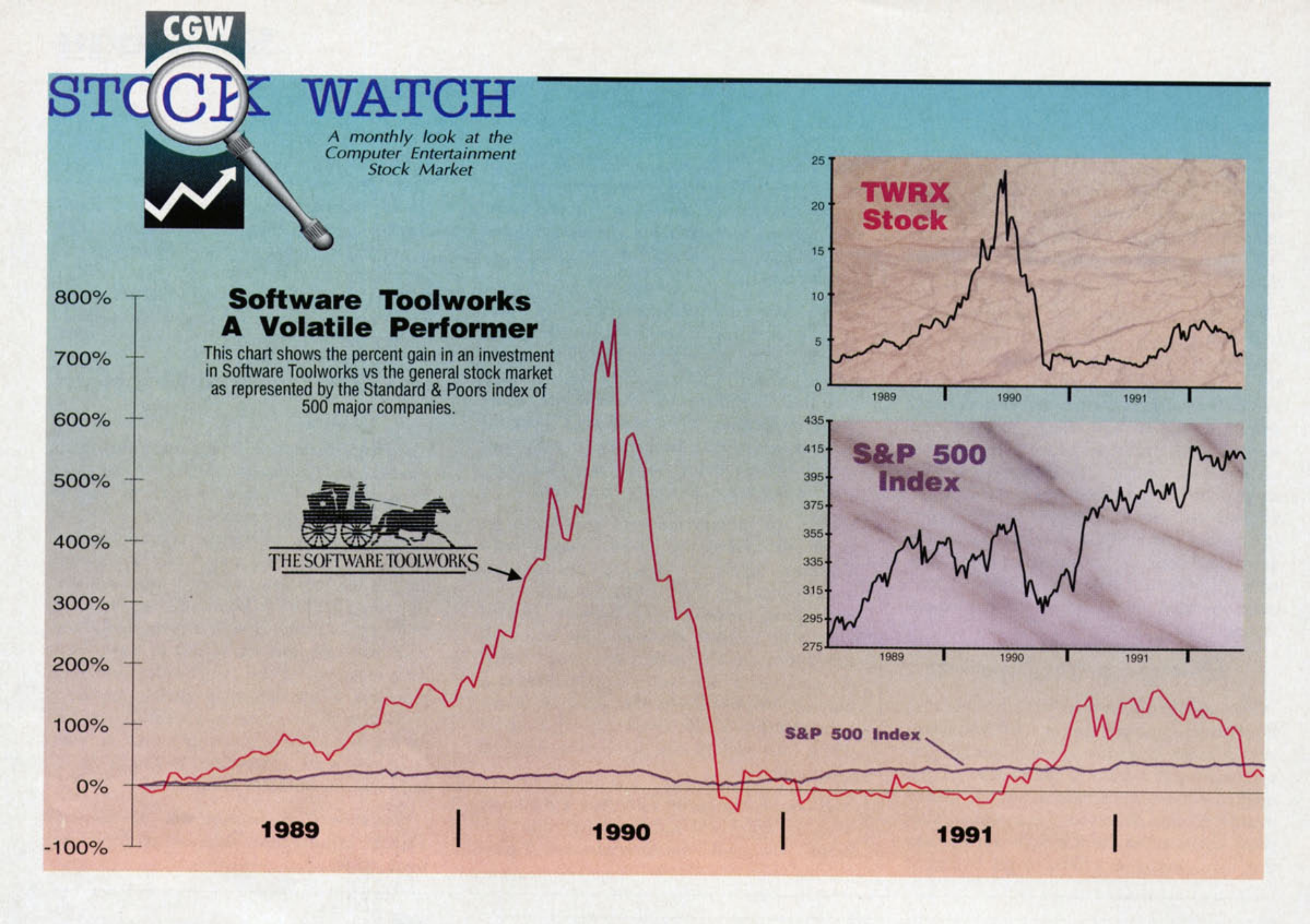
When one reaches the next level, one is no longer dependent on either Transportation Central or SlyNet for jobs. One can speculate on individual planetary exchanges and set up one's own lucrative runs between planets. Once that becomes *de rigueur*, the next level allows one to set up a customized trading company (complete with stockholders and, possibly, dividends). At the pinnacle of entrepreneurship is the ownership of a planet which one can design to his/her personal specifications.

Of course, any game with even a modicum of role-playing will also have its nadir (i.e. death). The good news for *Federation II* players is that death does not have to be permanent. One *dies*, but the player that has purchased insurance will have guaranteed that a clone will replace him/her immediately. This seems simple enough and provides enough risk that characters face meaningful death if they choose not to insure their characters and means that such a demise costs them something (even if only groats).

Would You Buy a Used Planet from this Trader?

In short, *Federation II* is a marvelous social environment that uses simple, text-based game mechanics as an excuse to have an on-line party. To the game's credit, there is an ever-increasing amount of variety as one advances within the game and this firmly holds one's interest (an important matter when the player is paying $6.00 per hour). To be sure, one could carp on the inevitable parser snarls and reset problems, but this would be superfluous since most on-line text games suffer from these problems. What one really carries away from *Federation II*, however, is a satisfied sense of having been "away," having visited a "real" imaginary place, somewhere. In fact, it's a cyburb where I wouldn't mind living.

***Federation II* is available on the General Electric Information Network at $6.00 per hour.** CGW



With "The Software Toolworks," Timing Means Everything

The *CGW Stock Watch* is a graphic look at the relative health of publicly traded computer entertainment software companies. The charts and commentary presented on this page are a reference point for hobbyists and potential investors, but should not be used as a primary tool for investment. As always, investors are advised to perform their own diligent research prior to investing. This information has been gathered in advance to meet the magazine's production schedule, and market adjustments may have occurred since then.

In writing about *The Software Toolworks* (NASDAQ: TWRX), one is tempted to recycle the lyric from Kenny Roger's "The Gambler." Rogers sang that, "You gotta' know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em," which would have been particularly true for investors who held *Software Toolworks* stock during the period from January of 1989 to mid-1992. For those who purchased the stock prior to *Software Toolworks'* acquisition of *Mindscape, Inc.*, the stock performed almost 800% better than the broader market (as measured by the 500 stocks indexed in Standard & Poor's 500). *Mindscape*'s **Nintendo** license, in particular, brought a great deal of optimism to investors during the next few months.

Like the broader market, however, TWRX fell during the latter half of 1990. An investor who purchased the stock at the apex would have seen the investment decline even faster than the overall market. Also reflecting the broader market, TWRX recovered slightly during the Persian Gulf Conflict, but sank throughout the late spring and summer after the company unveiled a loss of $1.78 per share at the close of the quarter ending March 31, 1991.

Investors regained enthusiasm for *Software Toolworks* stock in late 1991 and early 1992. The company began to show a profit, once again, on a combination of higher profit margins, new products (the *Miracle Piano Teaching System* was beginning to get penetration and the company was successful in bundling a wide range of CD-ROM products with new drives and machines) and higher sales (a 40% increase, by one estimate). Unfortunately, the stock dipped below the broader market once again when the company announced a fourth quarter operating loss that analysts suspect may augur an operating loss for the full fiscal year. CGW

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Keeping The Enemy From Becoming II Populous

***Hints and Strategies for Electronic Arts'* Populous II**

by Jeff James



As many Amiga gamers are undoubtedly aware, emerging victorious in **Electronic Arts'** *Populous II* (developed by **Bullfrog**) is no small feat. To earn a place among the heroes of Greek mythology, the player must do battle with nearly three dozen deities culled from the fertile mythic lore of ancient Greece. The ultimate goal of a *Populous II* gamer is to defeat the mightiest of the Greek gods — Zeus, the all-father, leader of the Greek pantheon. Although dozens of supernatural powers are available to aid the player in this quest, the immortal opponents one must face quickly become faster, more intelligent and more enduring with the defeat of each world. While there is no absolute path to victory, there are several strategies which all aspiring demigods would be wise to follow. While the following "commandments" are not divinely ordained, they are sound advice and worthy of consideration.

1. Thou shalt know thine enemy — and thyself.

In their eagerness to wreak havoc, many *Populous II* gamers may neglect to peruse the contents of the conquest and game options screens. The former shows the supernatural powers available for use on the next level, describes their effects and allows the player to view a portrait and short description of the opposing deity. The game options screen, accessed by clicking on the game options icon during play, displays the powers and restrictions currently in effect for each deity. Studying these screens provides the information needed to plan an effective strategy.



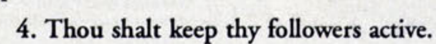
2. Thou shalt know thy goals.

After assimilating the contents of the conquest and game options screens, the player should choose a goal for the current world. If the primary goal is to conquer the current world, the enemy should be defeated as quickly as possible. If the goal is to earn experience, the player should still try to finish the battle quickly, but use a wide assortment of powers to do so. Finally, if the goal is, ultimately, to defeat Zeus (which is what most gamers will shoot for), a balance of the previous two strategies should be used.



3. Thou shalt keep thy lands flat.

This is perhaps the single most important rule in *Populous II,* just as it was in the original *Populous.* By raising lowlands and flattening mountains, you create more area for growing crops. More crops lead to bigger settlements, leading to better weapons and, in turn, leading to stronger, more numerous and effective groups of followers. Between attacks, the player would be wise to flatten as much land as possible.


4. Thou shalt keep thy followers active.

Building a large, robust population of followers is a prerequisite for victory. Walkers must be kept moving and erecting new and larger buildings. To influence them to do so, position the mouse pointer over the center of a building and press the right mouse button. A new walker is created and leaves the building, ready to create a new settlement.

5. Thou shalt honor the best defense by using a good offense.

Just as in football and modern warfare, *Populous II* rewards players who seize the initiative (*Carpe Ludum*?). Forcing the enemy to react to one's actions is crucial to winning the game. Losing that initiative forces an aspiring demigod to spend more time repairing damage and saving followers, resulting in less time for flattening land and taking the fight home to the enemy.

6. Thou shalt use powers of an enduring nature.



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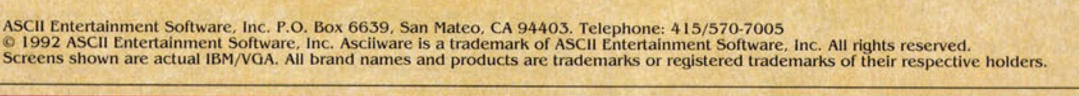
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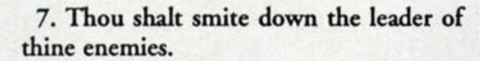
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While sending storms of wind against enemy walkers may *look* impressive, some of the most powerful forces in *Populous II* are of a less viscerally-stunning nature. Long-term effects are especially effective, such as the plague, swampland and fire effects. The baptismal font power is especially useful, able to turn the enemy's own walkers against him. Crippling a foe at the outset of combat with a long-term, force-sapping power reaps great rewards towards the end of a battle.





7. Thou shalt smite down the leader of thine enemies.

It may be tempting for one to use destructive powers on individual enemy walkers, but a seasoned *Populous II* player knows that such actions are folly, a vain striving after the wind. Instead, concentrate individual attacks on the mortal leader of enemy walkers. An enemy who finds himself/herself repeatedly creating new leaders has less time for attacking.

8. Thou shalt send heroes against thy foes.

One of the most effective powers to use against an enemy is the commissioning of a hero. The heroes (or heroines) in this game include: Perseus, Hercules, Odysseus, Achilles and Helen of Troy. Unlike other powers, where the player must spend time directing the course of destruction, heroes can be aptly described as "fire and forget" weapons. After creation, heroes aggressively hunt down one's enemies, continuing to do so (without any assistance from the player) until all enemy walkers have been destroyed or the heroes themselves are eliminated.

9. Thou shalt prepare for attacks from thine enemies.

Although time is best invested in attempting to keep the enemy on the defensive, it never hurts to be prepared. Building walls, paving roads, planting trees, and other defensive/constructive measures, can result in a better defensive position. In particular, ringing one's territory with a perimeter of raised land can be especially effective against streams of lava and tidal waves.

10. Thou shalt seek the powers vested in silicon.

In the last few hundred worlds, the computer is able to flatten his own lands with frightening speed. Although bound to decrease the amount of experience one attains from winning the current world, turning the computer assistance to the "on" position in the game options menu will help a player quickly flatten territory for use by his followers.

If thou shalt follow these commandments, then shall thy games be strong upon the face of thy computer monitor. CGW

Scorpion's Mail



So here it is, summertime already. You probably noticed we didn't get around to doing the spring cleaning in here. Maybe it will have to be summer cleaning (or autumn, or winter, or...). I don't know where the time goes these days.

It seems like only yesterday it was Christmas, and now the year is more than half over (Fred doesn't mind, though; he always looks forward to the annual Grues convention in August). Ah well, sooner or later, we'll get it done (I hope).

This time, we have a little something special for Amiga owners. Those of you who recently bought *Ultima VI* may have noticed a certain omission: no command card in the box. Oops. That makes it a bit hard to play, especially when you aren't sure how to save the game (grin). So, while you wait for **Origin** to send you a command card (which has all sorts of information), I am giving below the necessary keyboard commands to help you along. And with that said, let's get on to this month's mailbag.

Ultima VI: These are the basic commands for the game: A (Attack; this lets the Avatar alone attack something); B (Begin/End combat); C (Cast spell); D (Drop); G (Get); L (Look); M (Move); R (Rest); T (Talk); U (use). Control commands: Ctrl-S (Saves the game); Ctrl-R (Restores the game); Ctrl-Q (Quits the game without saving, so be sure to save first!); Ctrl-H (Help mode on/off); Ctrl-Z (music and sound on/off). Party commands: 1-8 puts that person into solo mode. 0 returns the person to the party. The solo character must be in sight of the group for 0 to work.

Treasures Of The Savage Frontier: Most people breeze through this one until they reach the Ice Peak. Then, they have a hard time trying to find the entrance to the fabulous treasure cave. Well, it *is* a little difficult to locate (after all, there's no sign that says, "This way to the final encounters!").

To make it a little easier, look for a door on the second screen at around 3,13. That's the beginning of the path to the entrance.

Ultima Underworld: Many players are experiencing frustrations in trying to get the Ring of Humility. Remember those instructions about staying away from the middle of the room? What they *should* have said was, "as soon as you set foot in there, get as close to the wall as possible and keep hugging the wall until all the switches have been pulled." You really do have to be *very* close to the wall. I also recommend saving before you go in, just in case. And remember to check your position on the auto-map so you pull the switches in the right order.

Secret of Monkey Island II: Wally could probably do something about those map pieces for you, if only he could see. Unfortunately, his regular monocle is gone forever (nope, you can't get it back, sorry). So, you'll just have to find some sort of substitute. Of course, one is available somewhere. I could enlighten you about that, but you'll have to do your own research this time.

Eye Of The Beholder I: The bonus for the third level is an easy one. I could say that what goes in can come out again, but that sounds a little kinky (grin). However, I couldn't really come up with a real gem of a clue, so you'll have to make do with that one.

Eye Of The Beholder II: A number of inquiries have come in asking about the infamous Mindflayer level. There are *many* of those Mindflayers, and they are tough to kill. Unfortunately, aside from the stairs up to Dran's lair, there ain't nothin' special about that place. All you get is the experience for killing the flayers; no goodies or special stuff. So, unless you really want to take the time out to kill all those critters, your best bet is to just hustle upstairs for the final encounter. That stone ankh you find is the same; there's no use for it (no portals anywhere around here, and I'll bet a lot of people were running around looking for a non-existent portal).

Elvira II: One thing a few folks are having trouble finding is the hidden altar that has those all-important black candles. They haven't checked out the bedrooms carefully enough. Remember to look under everything, and look around the room, too (sometimes, these secret entrances aren't easy to spot).

Might & Magic III: Holocard #1 seems to stump a lot of people. They find all the cards except that one. It's in the Fortress of Fear, folks, and like it or not, you have to go through that silly business with the levers to get the holocard. Mr. Mummy King has it, and you'll just have to pay him a visit. Some other players are having a bit of trouble in the Cathedral of Carnage with the movable altar heads. I'll bet they missed something back in the Temple of Moo. Or maybe they didn't realize the order is left to right as they look at the heads.

Adventures of Willy Beamish: Willy could probably do all sorts of neat things (and get into all sorts of neat trouble), if only he could get away from the babysitter. After she goes batty is a good time to suck up to her, preferably with baited breath (or at least hands). I bet she'd go for something warm and furry (no, not mink coat!).

Magic Candle II: For those who missed my original article on this game a couple issues back, it does have some bugs. One relates to Ziyx and the special scrolls. He's supposed to tell you where to research the particular scroll, but unfortunately he never recognizes them. The best thing to do is call or write Mindcraft and ask for the most recent upgraded version. There were other problems besides this one and you'll be better off with the later version of the game. If you prefer not to wait, you can just check all the libraries (there are only three, fortuately) until you find the right one for each scroll.

And that's about it for this look into the mailbag. Remember if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

On GEnie: Stop by the Games Roundtable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

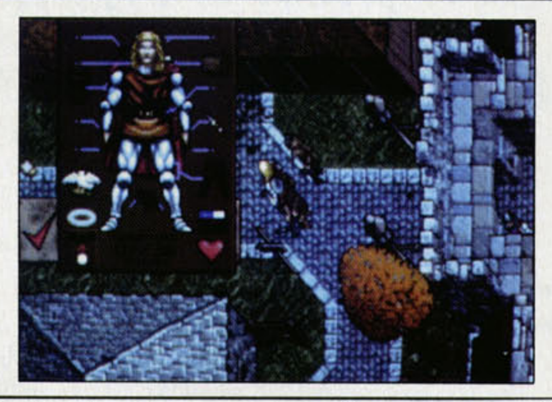
By US Mail (you must enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, NY NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! CGW

Scorpion's View

Origin's "Ultima VII: The Black Gate"

as told by Scorpia



Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to provide this forum for her distinctive and often controversial perspective.

Ultima VII: The Black Gate opens to a dead black menu and somber music. That, along with the black box cover and voluntary MP-13 rating, indicates this is going to be a dark game. Not dark in the sense of graphics, but dark in the matter of content. You arrive in Trinsic via an unexpected red moongate to find yourself at the site of a gruesome murder. Iolo is also present and explains that two hundred years have passed since your last visit. As you investigate the murder and its ramifications across Britannia, you find that those two hundred years have not all been happy ones.

A severe seven-year drought has recently ended, causing food prices to soar, and the Britannian Tax Council has been passing ever harsher taxes (some of which go to help support the estates of the nobles). People everywhere complain about corruption and incompetence in the government. Lock Lake is scummy and polluted, its once-pristine shores choked with garbage and animal bodies, mainly because a mining company has been dumping waste into the lake.

The Gargoyles moved from their shattered homeland to settle on the island of Terfin. Some have gone on to live in Britannian towns and cities, to be met with intolerance. Beyond any differences in color, creed, or culture, the Gargoyles are not human, and racial tension is escalating quickly, especially in Vesper, a hotbed of anti-Gargoyle prejudice.

Among the Gargoyles themselves, matters are not well, either. Elders bemoan the younger generation's rejection of the old ways; fewer all the time visit the shrines of Control, Diligence, and Passion. Even worse, the wingless worker class is becoming increasingly dissatisfied with what it considers to be its inferior status as compared to the winged ruling class.

Among Britannians, a similar division is starting to emerge over The Fellowship. Begun twenty years ago, its philosophy spread rapidly across the land, gaining many converts. While it purports to be a benevolent organization, an "us vs. them" attitude is developing between members and non-members, driving people apart. Britannia isn't storybook anymore.

However, don't think you're here to bring peace, joy, and love, waving your hands to make everything nice again. The Avatar only appears in Britannia when some dire outside menace threatens the land, and this time is no different. This time, the menace is The Guardian. It is no secret that The Guardian is up to no good; you have only to sit through the introduction to know he and his plans are thoroughly evil. Preventing those plans from coming to fruition is the main object of the game.

The Changing of the Trumps

As the opening chapter of a new trilogy, *Ultima VII* ushers in a number of changes from previous games. For one thing, there is no character creation as such. You choose only name and gender; the Avatar's attributes are all preset. The gypsy woman and her virtue questions are now things of the past.

While conversation is still an important part of play, it is now entirely mouse-driven. Text appears on the screen over the graphics (all action stops during chats with people). You generally begin with the standard "name," "job," and "bye," other keywords or phrases appear as the conversation progresses. Additional words may also appear based on earlier talks with other people. A click of the cursor on any word or phrase brings up information about it.

All actions are, in fact, mouse-driven in this game. The right button controls movement, while the left button does everything else, from starting conversations to examining items, looking at your inventory, exploring the contents of various containers, picking up objects, checking party stats, opening doors, reading signs and operating machinery. While the mouse interface is simple to use, it becomes somewhat awkward when you want to check everyone's hitpoints after a combat. Using the mouse, you must first double-click on yourself. This brings up the first screen, showing armor worn and items carried. Then, you click on the heart symbol, which brings up the second screen that displays your attributes and hit points. To look at someone else, you must now double-click on that person, followed by a click on his or her heart symbol to see the stat screen. This gets old pretty quickly. Fortunately, there *are* hot keys in the game that bypass this and other redundancies. Using these keys will help keep down wear and tear on the mouse, and save time as well.

The shrines still exist, but are sadly neglected and, apparently, non-functional. To increase any of your stats, you must find a trainer (there are many), pay a fee in gold, and have the necessary training points (which come with gains in experience levels).

Graphically, *Ultima VII: The Black Gate* is excellent. While it uses the same top-down, three-quarter view introduced in *Ultima VI*, the graphics are far better in every respect. Not only are they larger,

but much more finely detailed and colored. Forests look like real forests. Swamps are appropriately yucky. Oceans have currents and swells. Shadows of overhead clouds can be seen on the ground. Overall, the visual representation of the world is a first-class job.

Also, music and speech are used to good effect in the game. There are several different tunes that play at appropriate points for short periods of time. Most important is the foreboding music that comes up when anything hostile is in the vicinity, whether you can see it yet or not. In most cases, this gives you time to get out of the area if you don't want to engage in combat. Speech is limited to the Guardian. The first time he talks to you, out of nowhere, is a very unsettling experience. His remarks, with their undercurrent of amused mockery, are peppered throughout the game, but used sparingly enough to make them very effective.

For all that, any product that pushes the limits of technology is going to have problems and *Ultima VII* certainly has its share. These can be broken down into three broad categories: technical limitations, bugs, and design weaknesses.

While *Ultima VII* is advertised as a 386 game, the ideal system for it is a 486/33 with 4 megs or more of RAM and a large hard drive. On anything less, it is going to be slow, and the less you have, the slower it will be. On my 386/20 with only (only!) two megs of RAM, it was *very* slow. Disk access was almost continuous. There were many times when my party stopped dead in its tracks, often for several seconds, while the program went to the drive. When there was a lot of animation on the screen, movement became even more excruciating, particularly in dungeons. Overall, I estimate that the slow speed of the game added about a week to my playing time.

A number of people who've played on "lesser" machines have reported that speed was more tolerable if they had memory above 2 megs. The additional memory was used as a disk cache, and helped to make the game run faster. If you have 4 meg or more on your machine, set up the extra as a disk cache.

Another consideration is hard drive space. *Ultima VII* is *huge*, and requires a lot of room. Figure about 21 meg for the game files alone. Add in another 2 meg that is required just to boot up. Then, calculate space for your save files at about 400,000 bytes per file (they start smaller, but grow as you progress through the game), to a maximum of ten files (you can, of course, have fewer than 10; I had to squeak by with only four). Overall, you will need anywhere from about 23-27 meg free on your hard disk to play the game. One thing to watch out for is the fact that the program does not take that "bootup 2 megs" into account when it calculates how much space you have for save games. This little fact is *not* mentioned in the docs; I learned about it the hard way. Supposedly, there was room on my drive for eight save positions. Unfortunately, once they were all filled in, the game would no longer boot, since I then had less than 2 megs free. I had to delete half the saves in order to free up the necessary space.

Speaking of boot-ups, you will have to create a special, "plain vanilla" boot floppy to bring up your system. **Origin** uses its own custom memory manager, called "voodoo memory", which is not compatible with commercial memory managers. The disk is simple to make (since there is very little in the CONFIG and AUTOEXEC files), and despite complaints from some people, is not really very onerous to use. Besides which, after you're done playing, you can simply take the disk out of the drive and reboot with your usual configuration. This "voodoo memory" was meant to be a solution to the compatibility problems that arise from multiple configurations. Unfortunately, it seems to have created some problems of its own. These bugs are the more insidious because they are random in nature, and don't happen to everyone. Since they are random, **Origin** has not yet been able to track down the exact cause(s) and, as I write this, there is no fix for any of them but one. This one occurs in the final dungeon, on the Isle of The Avatar. Shortly after entering the tunnels, you come to a metal wall near the prison cells. The wall is supposed to retract as you approach it. For some people (myself included), it refuses to budge. Should this happen to you, try restoring to an earlier save and playing on from there. Try all your saves, if possible. If nothing you try makes the wall descend, save the game at the wall. Copy that save to a floppy disk, and send it to **Origin**. They will manually edit the file and send it back. You *have* to do this, because you must get past that wall — there is no other way to finish the game. I've been told that the wall problem can be avoided by visiting the Shrine of the Codex and reading the scroll inside *before* you visit the dungeon. Naturally, gamers who find themselves *in* the dungeon before they encounter the problem will need to restore to an earlier save and read this before entering the dungeon.

Another bug is missing graphics. A friend of mine was able to leave Trinsic simply by walking west; there was never a wall around the town in his game. Other people have reported parts of cities missing when they entered (this could sometimes be cleared up by leaving and re-entering). This never occurred in my game; the graphics were stable throughout. In a similar vein is the missing body or bodies in the Minoc sawmill. A murder takes place there shortly before you arrive and you are supposed to investigate the murder scene. However, no matter how many times I went in there, no bodies were present. This apparently does not happen to everyone. Other players *have* seen the

corpses. Fortunately, this is a side plot, and the missing bodies will not affect completing the game. While tracking down the Ethereal Ring, I was told to speak to Draxinusum, the Gargoyle leader on Terfin. Sorry to say, "ring" (ethereal or otherwise), never showed up as a conversational option. Luckily, I happened to know that the Sultan of Spektran had it (the ring is an important item that you very much need).

Once in awhile, the game will lock up for no apparent reason. Everything stops, and there is no response to mouse or keyboard. *Ultima VII* froze on me twice, but rebooting cleared up the problem with no detrimental results as far as I could tell. In the matter of design flaws, there is the "key problem." The program deletes keys from your inventory when you sleep anywhere, whether you have used them or not. This is a "feature," not a bug. Fortunately, this "feature" is being eliminated in versions 3.1 of the game. If you don't have that version, you can get around the problem by putting all your keys in one pack and dropping that pack on the ground before you sleep. The keys will still be there in the morning. Try not to forget that, because a deleted key is gone forever. The only way to get it back is to restore to an earlier save, when you still had it or before you found it.

Combat was one of the least fun aspects of the game. You have no direct control over anyone except the Avatar. The best you can do is set people to such things as "attack nearest," "attack weakest," "attack strongest," "flee," etc. There is no explanation of what the program considers "strong" or "weak."

Most of the time, though, that doesn't matter as opponents usually come in ones or twos. Unfortunately, this means your party crowds around the enemy and tends to inflict more damage on each other than on the opponents. This happens even when people are equipped with distance weapons like bows and magic axes: for some reason, they still get in very close before using the weapons. Only Dupre was smart enough to stand well back with his magic hammer.

Magic is another weak point. Several spells do not work as described: "Protect All" *doesn't*; it's supposed to keep the party safe from hazards while travelling, but I don't recommend walking over caltrops, even when this spell is up. "Peer" shows you a map of the world, but neglects to indicate your position. "Wizard Eye" shows only outdoor views, even when cast underground. "Reveal" rarely reveals *anything:* neither invisible doors, secret passages nor invisible opponents. Also, because of crowding, offensive spells can be deadly to your party. They really have to be cast at something before combat begins. The only spell I used (and then only when we faced multiple enemies) was "Magic Storm," which worked very well.

Also sorely needed was a solo mode for the Avatar. There are several instances when the Avatar must act alone. This requires talking to every party member, telling him or her to "leave" (the group) and "wait here." Later, of course, you must talk to each person again and ask them to rejoin. This, by the way, is also the

A Scorpion's Eye View of "Ultima VII: The Black Gate"



While there is no character creation as such, you must be careful about training your Avatar. You are the only person in the party who can cast spells, so some combat training will have to be sacrificed in favor of magical advancement. Since the number of times you can train is limited, you will have to decide early on just how much you want to devote to fighting and how much to magic.

Magic, as noted in the main article, is not terrifically helpful in combat. However, you still need spells for such things as healing, dispelling fields, and unlocking magically-locked doors. These all require mana, and the more you have, the better, since it regenerates rather slowly. The alternative to high mana is finding a safe place and just standing there for awhile until the points come back.

Since you are the only spellcaster, training everyone else is simplified: you look for the best combat teachers. For pure combat, no one beats De Snel at The Library of Scars in Jhelom. His training costs only 4 gold and 2 points, and generally adds +4 to +5 to combat skill.

However, you can't neglect strength or dexterity too much. Strength determines not only how much you can carry, but how many hit points you have, on a one-for-one basis. Dexterity determines how fast you are in combat, and you certainly don't want people to be slowpokes in that area. The best all-around trainer, therefore, is the Gargoyle Inforlem on Terfin. His training, for 50 gold and 3 points, adds +1 to both Strength and Dexterity, and +2 - +4 to Combat Skill. The add to combat is variable; for example, one time Iolo got +2, another time, +3. For the same price, Inforlem also provides mage training, giving +2 Intelligence and +3 Magic. This makes him a handy one-stop-for-all when it's time to train up. Keep in mind, though, that as you get into the higher levels, you may need to go to other trainers. This is because 30 is the maximum for both skills and attributes. There is no point in paying for training that you can't use. The only problem with training is that you don't really know what you're getting until you've got it. To avoid unpleasant surprises, you may want to save before visiting a new trainer for the first

time and restore if you don't like what you get.

Who you have in your party is up to you. You'll probably want the usual trio of Iolo, Shamino, and Dupre. Shamino is at the Blue Boar in Britain and Dupre at the Bunk and Stool in Jhelom. Spark, the kid in Trinsic, should not be overlooked. He comes with mucho training points and, once you have some cash, you can train him up to be equal to, or better than, any adult in the party. Beyond those, there are the familiar faces from yesteryear: Sentri, Katrina and Jaana, as well as the ranger Tseramed (Demarest spelled backwards; check the game credits).

Jaana is now a healer, and I had her in the group for a brief time. Naturally, I figured she would be an asset in helping heal the walking wounded. As it turned out, that wasn't the case. She fixed up Tseramed one night in Skara Brae. The afternoon of the next day, I asked her to heal someone else. She replied she had to wait awhile before healing again. At that point, Jaana was sent on her way back to Cove. Who needs this? You're better off with your own healing spells and rings of regeneration, or even a pay-to-heal healer.

Since you're here to save the world, worrying about petty cash should be far down on your list of things to do. The best way to make money is at the House of Games in Buccaneer's Den, playing Triples. The "any triple" pays off a 26-1. Don't be too greedy, though. A 100 gp bet will net you 2600, but that's also 26 stone in weight that you have to distribute among the party. Win too much, and you may not be able to carry it all.

Getting around at the start can be a problem. As you soon learn, the Orb of Moons is not reliable. Half the time, you break your nose and bounce off a you try to enter a moongate. Ships are expensive. The very best way to get around (and a great timesaver), is our old friend, the flying carpet. You can find this at the entrance to dungeon Despise (not a place low-level parties should enter) by following the Lost River into the mountains. You will not need to join the Fellowship if you have the magic carpet. The carpet has improved flying ability now, and can zip right over cities, mountains, and oceans. There are a few places it can't cross (usually a house on top of a mountain), but overall, you can get most anywhere with it, except Skara Brae, which has no place to land, so you must take the ferry.

Speaking of Skara Brae, you might be misled by Mordra's insistence on the "one vial of mandrake essence." In fact, the vial you find in her hut is empty. The actual essence is the glowing potion.

There are many side plots and quests in the game. Following these through generally gives you some brownie points, a little experience and a feeling of satisfaction at helping someone out of a hole. I was, however, a trifle upset that Sprellic in Jhelom didn't offer us, at least, a free night at the inn for saving his miserable life. There are some things, however, you can ignore. Trying to track down Abraham and Elizabeth is one of them. No matter what you do, they will always be one town ahead of you, and eventually the trail dies out. You won't catch up to them until the very end, so put your time into something more productive.

On Ambrosia, there is a mysterious house with a magically-locked door on a tiny island in the bay. There is also some sort of hideout behind a false wall in the SE end, near the campfire. Sorry to say, both of these places have nothing of interest in them. This is very annoying, since magic fizzles a lot in Ambrosia (no magic works when the sparkles are on the screen), and you have to wait a *long* time before you can cast a spell.

Everyone wants magic weapons. You can "borrow" some from Serpent's Hold. The key to the armory is hidden in one of the bedrooms. Your party will protest when you take it, but they won't say "boo" when you hand out the goodies.

However, do be careful about your actions. If your people start complaining about your behavior too much, they might also start leaving the party.

Their actions in this regard are very inconsistent and puzzling. For example, they yelled at me when I removed caltrops from the entrance to a cave. Yet it was Iolo himself who suggested that we return to the Royal Museum after hours to "borrow" the eight virtue stones. Those stones are good to have, once you've learned "Mark" and "Recall." Using these can get you around *very* fast, and they are 100% reliable.

There are three magical generators, but I will only say something briefly about two of them. Have a glass sword handy before entering the Tetrahedron (what's inside is *quite* nasty). Before entering the cube, bring along a ring of regeneration or some healing potions, and a light source. Magic doesn't work in there. You'll need to see, and you will also take some damage, no matter what.

There is no listing in the docs on the abilities of various weapons and armor, or what different potions do. However, there are a couple of places in the game where you can read a book to find out about them. One such place is Inforlem's training establishment. Check out the volumes there and you shouldcome across the one you want pretty quickly.

Finally, in case you're having trouble finding the right way through the game, the main path begins up at Empath Abbey. Good luck!



Games we'd Like To See
Divorce Wars

by Chuck Moss

The player character stands at the big brass door, collected wealth in hand. The door opens. Inside … aaagghhh! It's a subpoena! Down another 40 hit points, everyone wonders if our hero/heroine can possibly make it through another month?

Welcome to *Divorce Wars*, newest computer role playing game from **MicroTorment**. *Divorce Wars* is set in the fictional realm of Legalmania and players must negotiate the treacherous mazes and landscapes of Sundered Matrimony, puzzles, challenges and mortal combat abound, finally confronting an evil monstrous warrior/wizard/world-swallowing demon: The Ex.

Players begin by choosing one of four character types: plaintiff, defendant, priest/psychologist, or lawyer/thief. The player begins the game with a skill (First Level Legal Knowledge), a $150,000 dollar house, a life insurance policy, some savings and two kids. Protect these assets, folks. They melt all too rapidly!

From the opening sequence, the player is handed a summons to appear in Divorce Court, a terrible dungeon filled with monsters which will strip a player to the bone. To survive and triumph, the player must descend to Legal Alley and recruit a company of non-player characters, with varying skill and ethics levels. It's important to get the right combination of skills: best mix is hungry lawyer, mad accountant, crooked psychologist, and greedy private detective. They'll fight loyally, but only so long as one has the gold to pay them!

From here on, it's mayhem galore, as the player's merry band puzzles out Motions and Depositions, ferrets out assets, follows paper trails, and hides his/her own wealth, all heading for the showdown in front of The Judge and that all-important Final Decree. Victory is determined by adding up "preserved cash" points and a relative standing on the Emotional Agony Index.

Divorce Wars is available for IBM and Amiga, with EGA or VGA graphics which are superb. The fangs on one's Ex drip with gore and it is possible to almost smell one's lawyer's bad breath. The combat sequences go quickly and are handled via a unique resolution system: the player with the most money wins!

Warning: Next Section Contains Specific Game Hints:

Spend lots of cash up front for a lawyer who combines a high skill with a low rating on the ethical index. Stay out of Bureaucracy Maze until the protagonist's Legal Savvy Level reaches 25. Hide all assets under "the kids." Spend charisma points to butter up The Mediator … it pays off in the inevitable encounter before The Judge. Don't try to fight a Family Law Attorney all alone: these specialized killing machines are virtually unstoppable. Be nice to the bailiff and, above all, always have lots of money handy.

Better yet, the magical spell of being good to one's spouse can often postpone or preclude the demonic transmogrification into The EX. CGW



Art by Rodger MacGowan; © 1992 RBM Graphics

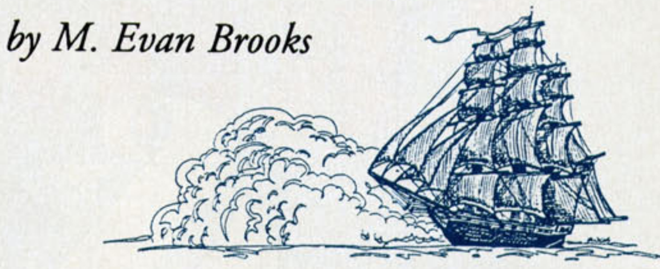
COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

Computer Wargaming World is published twelve times a year as a free supplement in ***Computer Gaming World.***

II Samuel 22:35

Broadsides & Gripeshot

by M. Evan Brooks



Wargaming Personalities Debate Hobby's Future

The following bulletins were posted in April and May of 1992 on the GEnie Games RoundTable (Category 4, Topics 11 and 14). We thought we would share what some of the hobby "giants" are saying about the current state of wargaming.

Richard Berg:

(Richard Berg is a long time board wargame designer and critic known for his expertise in ancient and American Civil War subjects).

Personally, I find computer historical simulations clumsy and frustrating — and that's making allowances for the (still) somewhat gruesome graphics they exude. My main complaint is frustration . . . not in winning, etc., but knowing *why* the game is working the way it does. You make a move, the computer handles the rest. But you, not knowing how the game "works" (e.g., what is the Combat Results Table, how does movement affect morale or cohesion and a long list of other etc.'s) simply take that game system on blind faith. There's simply too much "deus ex machina" going on in the *black box* for me to ever become more than cursorily interested in the two or so dozen computer games I have sitting on my shelf.

—The end result is that I rarely learn anything (I mean in terms of history) when playing a computer game because I don't understand why anything is happening. And history, for me, is never what — always *why.* Board games are truly democratic — everything is out in the open; computer games are run on a "need to know" basis and, as far as the designer/company is concerned, your "needs" are insignificant.

Jim Dunnigan:

(Jim Dunnigan is the founder of SPI and is generally regarded as "the Dean of board wargaming." He has designed dozens of wargames, led SPI and Strategy & Tactics magazine through their glory days of the '70s and currently authors books on modern military affairs.)

Good point, RA. We saw the dearth of opponents among adult gamers during the focus groups in the late 1970s. Demographics being what they were, there was no solution other than computer games. Solitaire [board] games were only a partial solution as they added more mechanics (for the "opponent"). Moreover, as gamers got older, they wanted more meat in their games. But they also didn't want more complexity, as they had less time for gaming. Moreover, they had more money ("the hobby of the over-educated" as we used to put it). No wonder computer games became so popular. Computer game publishers have also discovered that many wargamers can (and do) buy the latest and most powerful computers to play the latest games (which is why you need at least a 386 or high end Mac).

Chris Crawford:

*(Chris Crawford has been a "guru" of computer game design from this hobby's inception in the late 1970s and early 1980s. With titles like **Eastern Front, Patton vs. Rommel, Balance of Power** and, most recently, **Patton Strikes Back** to his credit, Chris is a certified wargamer and historian. Chris also edits* The Journal of Computer Game Design *in his copious "spare time.")*

Yes, I agree . . . that there just isn't a market anymore for "wargames for the rest of us." Which means that we can write off the entire wargaming niche in about five years. We are now well on the way toward repeating the experience of boardgames in the late 70s and early 80s. Basically, the Grognards took over and the publishers had to jettison the "boardgames for the rest of us." This dried up the supply of new gamers and, as the population steadily fell, this caused sales to fall, which resulted in lower-quality games, which caused sales to fall even further until the whole thing just ground down to almost nothing. SPI went bust and boardgame design was taken over by a tiny group of small companies that were supported by the tiny group of Grognards who just wouldn't give up. That's the way things stand now, with board wargames still out there, but certainly a shadow of their glorious days in the 70s. I think that computer wargaming is now going to go down that path. I did my bit to reverse that course, but it just wasn't meant to be. Too bad. As I said, I give it five years.

Jim Dunnigan:

It's natural for markets to mature and, as they mature, they achieve a size where they fragment into niches. Some of the niches become larger than the original concept that get everything going. Markets also suffer from coming into and out of fashion. Happened with model railroads and Science Fiction several decades ago and so on.

Wargames were the first simulation games. Until the fiction stuff came along (fantasy and SF), anyone eager about simulations had to play wargames until *D&D* came along. SPI had a chance to go for niche or go for broke (on the assumption that there was a mass market for wargames). There wasn't, there isn't and so it goes. If you service your niche, you can still make money publishing computer wargames. Many publishers are doing just that and will continue to do it. I collected a lot of data on that subject for the forthcoming new edition of *The Wargamer's Handbook* and found that the wargames market is larger now than it was in the heyday of paper wargames during the 1970s. Computers made the difference.

As a side note, right up until I left SPI, the simpler games (Quads, for the most part) sold very well, as did the monster games. It was the games that were neither fish nor fowl that got into trouble.

Chris Crawford:

There's something interesting here. As pointed out, there will always be the hard core of dedicated wargamers. But the wargames industry has, at times, been able to break out into a larger audience with special products. I'll not make a fool of myself by pontificating about boardgames, so let me talk about computer wargames. My first experience with this phenomenon was with *Eastern Front (1941)*, a wargame that sold fabulously well — far better than anybody (myself included) expected. Our customer feedback forms clearly showed that most purchasers were not wargamers. A similar phenomenon occurred with *Patton vs Rommel* — I got a lot of feedback along the lines of "I used to play those old Avalon Hill wargames, but I haven't played anything since then until *Patton vs Rommel* came along."

The model I'm thinking of has a core of dedicated wargamers surrounded by a much larger shell of "dilettante wargamers." The dilettantes are enticed in by the occasional simple wargame and a few of them are then mutated by "Grognard Rays" into dedicated wargamers. (This is known as the "Crawford B-Movie Theory of Wargame Marketing"). Anyway, if we wipe out that outer shell of dilettantes, the hard core will wither.

Chris Crawford:

Yes, Peter, I have to admit that the hard core will never disappear, but I think that it can and will diminish in size. The question here is, from where do hard-core wargamers come? Let's face it, there's a hump you have to get over to become hard-core, a minimum amount of effort required to learn the vocabulary and folkways of the subculture. Who will induce a newbie to make the effort and who will help him?

Obviously, there will be some direct, hard-core proselytizing: hard-core members directly recruiting new hard-core members. The problem here is the magnitude of the step required when the newbie is completely green. A hard-core wargamer who grabs somebody off the street and starts jabbering about how great *Harpoon* is will not likely make the sale. Indeed, the gulf between the hard-core wargamer and the average person is so great that such proselytizing behavior is more likely to be off-putting. What's needed here is some sliver of common ground, some gulf-narrowing common experience that demonstrates favorable inclination on the part of the potential acolyte.

This is where the games for the non-hard-core come in. If they can provide an intermediate step, then they can attract soft-core players into the hard-core. There are a huge number of potential hard-core players. Right now, we are enjoying a large number of hard-core gamers, largely because (I suspect) there was a great many intermediate-level computer wargames over the last five years. It's good that we are satisfying their elevated tastes with games like *Harpoon* and *Civilization*. But I hope that we don't cut out the intermediate-level games that got us here in the first place. I fear that this is, indeed, what is happening.

Jim Dunnigan:

Nevertheless, games like *Harpoon, Civilization* and the simulators sell big numbers. The game's the thing. As I regularly remind my editor, I write books for a core audience, but I'm also buying an expensive lottery ticket with each one I turn out. In the book business there are always those mid-list titles that all of a sudden break big. People are strange and markets are stranger still.

Chris Crawford:

We discussed the evolution of the term "Grognard" earlier — I had to be set straight on a misunderstanding about it. The consensus seems to be that the term is ultimately derived from a French verb (grogner, I believe) that means "to complain." From there, it was applied to veteran soldiers of Napoleon's armies who, apparently, spent a lot of time complaining.

Mark, I just can't accept your position that there just isn't any difference between good games for veterans and good games for beginners. It strikes me as a "what I like is what everybody likes" kind of argument (and I've read far too many customer feedback cards to believe that). Of course, as the audience changes and we eliminate the beginners, it becomes a kind of self-fulfilling statement.

Jim Dunnigan:

Computer wargames have an advantage over manual wargames in that you can have difficulty levels all the way from "*shoots* and ladders" up to "Grognard heaven." The simulators have been doing that for years and the dweeb level most have is usually the only level I can operate at (no eye-hand coordination to speak of and joystick or mouse doesn't help me at all). If you can crank up the intensity, you'll generally end up with something the Grognards will like. Apparently, this works.

Speaking of "Grognard," anyone out there with a complete set of S&Ts from the 1970s will probably find the first use of the term "Grognard" in one of the OutGoing Mail columns in the early 1970s. We had a lot of Napoleonic enthusiasts hanging around SPI in those days (including several who did their research in the original French and German language sources). I believe it was John Young (who died in 1975, alas, so I cannot ask him) who first came up with the term (he spoke French). He noted that no matter how complex a game was, there were always hard core gamers who wanted more complexity or more rules or . . . . well, you get the idea.

Dondo Aldrich:

(Dondo is an astute GEnie user who may have really hit on something)

My two cents: Please, note that *all* examples given in the last few posts of crossover hits are of non-specific games (as opposed to *Patton Strikes Back*, which recreates a specific battle or historic occurrence). If nothing else, this means they can be replayed again and again. *PSB*, as fine a game as it is, loses replay value pretty quickly.

Furthermore, games like *Empire, Civilization* and so on hark back to the really classic all time games like *chess* — that is, you are given a set of pieces, told this is what they can do and then, go to it. The way the rest of the game unfolds depends on what the players do with the pieces. In many of the "strategic simulations," there are an awful lot of restrictions in what one can do. This is, of course, because the point of a *PSB* is to recreate a certain set of conditions.

I simply think the public as a whole is more likely to be interested in a game with good replay value and changing results than in determing what would have happened in some battle they know little about if some general they have never heard of had done something other than what he did.

If you are designing games solely for the money, you had best keep the *chess - go - backgammon* model in mind, rather than trying to recreate a specific historic situation.

Chris Crawford:

Dondo, that's a damn good point! I hadn't noticed the fact that the successful games Mark referred to are all "generic situation" games. Jim may correct me here, but I think I recall a comment he made in the pages of *S&T* once that, in the boardgame world, the "generic situation" games were all failures (*Combined Arms* and several later attempts in that direction, as well as *Strategy I*) while the bigger hits were always specific to a situation. Jim, is that correct? If so, then we have a truly interesting inversion here.

If this be so, then it suggests a number of things. Perhaps wargame enthusiasts, who seem to prefer the specific battles, do indeed have some natural proclivities that run counter to the interests of the general population. And then there's things like *UMS* and Dan Bunten's generic style games, or my own *Global Dilemma*; why did these games fail?

There's something fishy going on here . . .

Jim Dunnigan:

Computer wargames on specific battles have been successfully published. They don't sell the numbers that non-specific games do for several reasons:

1. Computer wargames came along as manual wargames were deep into the futuristic games (always the best selling category). These were generally more non-specific than historical games. Computer wargame publishers simply picked up what the manual game publishers were already doing.

2. Computer wargames take advantage of being able to make simulator type games playable. These never worked well in manual format. The closest manual games could come to exploiting simulators were in the very successful tactical games (and it isn't easy making a tactical game playable. I still vividly remember the brainstorming required to get *Panzer-Blitz* working 23 years ago). Tactical games also tend to be non-specific.

3. Most computer wargame designers start out as programmers, whereas most manual wargame designers are history buffs who can organize data and write it all down. Early SSI games show how many computer wargame designers solved their research and design needs in one swift motion (I was flattered). In any event, the computer wargame designer is not as much a history buff as the manual wargamer designer. Again, more non-specific wargames are the result.

4. Computer wargames increased the wargame audience substantially. But in the process, it "diluted" the previous manual wargame audience by bringing in more people who were not history buffs. The 1970s wargamer was largely a "historical" wargamer. The game was a means towards the study of a specific historical event. The 1980s wargamer was interested in warfare in general and no so much specific historical events. Indeed, many of the more successful computer wargames deal with future history (contemporary or science fiction).

Here is where we will end our eavesdropping on-line. Hopefully, this "food for thought" will stimulate the debate in the pages of Computer Wargaming World.

CGW

Plucking Chestnuts from a Polish Fire Avalon Hill's "Computer Third Reich"

by Wyatt Lee



TITLE: Computer Third Reich
SYSTEMS: Amiga, Atari ST
PRICE: $39.95
PROTECTION: Document Look-Up
DESIGNER: John Prados, Donand Greenwood and Larry Butcher
DEVELOPER: Thalean Software
PUBLISHER: The Avalon Hill Game Co. Baltimore, MD

At the launching of the Battleship Tirpitz on April Fuehrer's Day, 1939, Adolf Hitler served notice on the world that he would not brook any intervention into Polish-German disagreements (concerning the pre-Versailles borders of Germany and the so-called Free City of Danzig) by the soon-to-become Allied nations. "He who declares himself ready to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for these [Polish] powers must realize he burns his fingers." (William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, p. 467). Within two days of this pronouncement, Hitler was to order all branches of the Wehrmacht to prepare and submit their battleplans by May 1, 1939. Case White, as the offensive against Poland was coded, was to be launched on September 1, 1939. This would plunge the world irrevocably into World War II.

Computer Third Reich (*C3R*) is the computer version of Avalon Hill's classic boardgame, *The Rise and Decline of the Third Reich* (*3R*), and is based on the conduct of strategic warfare in World War II. Unlike wargames which simply supply orders of battle so that players may place the appropriate units on the map, corresponding to each unit's actual or hypothetical deployment in history, *3R* (and its computer wargame version) confronts gamers with a larger picture. The armchair generals who command the armies in both *3R*s must consider the economic advantages to be gained from their conquests and must "purchase" each unit which is placed on the board. Economic gains are measured in terms of basic resource points (BRPs) which are spent on units during the construction phase of each seasonal turn. Hence, orders of battle are generated from the success or failure of previous operations as opposed to gleaned from the pages of history. Also, many wargames are simply the replaying of one particular battle or series of battles, where both *3R* and *C3R* present the ebb and flow of a full campaign across the entire European theater of war.

As noted in *CGW*'s sneak preview coverage of this game (#86, p. 22), *C3R* uses an earlier version of the rules than the current edition of the boardgame. It is faithful to the earlier rules and having the computer handle all the game mechanics means that the magazine-sized manual (30+ pages of fine print on 8 1/2" x 11" paper) could be reduced to the equivalent of ten such pages. *C3R* is ideal for teaching the basics of the game to beginners and placing the game on the computer facilitates saving games for both multi-player games at the same computer and play-by-mail games between two players.

Unfortunately, the way the turn format is handled, the program is only useful for assisting two players in a play-by-mail format where players send the disk back and forth. Further, Amiga owners will not enjoy being forced to use DF0: for both the program and the save disks (There is a fix, however. See the sidebar.).

Horses Against Tanks!

C3R begins with the Axis powers ready to declare war on Poland and execute "Case White." Indeed, the Axis player begins the game by deciding just which countries to declare war upon and on which of three fronts (Western, Eastern and Mediterranean) to fund offensives. The game is played in turns, each of which represents three months of combat, and consists of phases for: declarations of war, funding of offensives, movement, combat, exploitation movement and combat and strategic redeployment. Then, at the beginning of each calendar year of combat, the player must fund strategic submarine and air power.

Movement and combat are handled just as one would handle them in the boardgame. Instead of picking up a cardboard counter with a military symbol on it, one clicks on a counter and then clicks hex by hex across the map. Unfortunately, the interface does not allow for one to take back a move once the right mouse button has been clicked. This becomes increasingly less of a problem, however, as one becomes used to the interface. Combat is handled using the same combat results tables and dialogue boxes pop-up to ask the opposition about naval or air interception when such could be applicable.

The interface is designed to be as intuitive as possible. The programmers put plenty of buttons into the game that allow players to scroll around the map at various angles and increments. With a big map such as one has in C3R, that is a very welcome feature. At one time or another, I've been thankful for them all. Unfortunately, the interface is not always as intuitive as it was designed to be. Sometimes, a player must click on the "Exit" button in-between individual actions (such as the construction phase for each major power controlled or each distinctive "breakthrough" to be exploited), while at other times, hitting the "Exit" button will abruptly end the entire phase for all of the player's countries. Such interface inconsistency caused this reviewer to be brutally defeated during his first playing of *C3R*, but rarely caused any problems thereafter.

Blitzkrieg Über Alles

Just as it is necessary for players to take out Poland early in order to be able to have a reasonable shot at winning on the eastern front, so is it necessary to conquer Poland almost immediately in order to have a chance at winning in *C3R*. This is particularly true when one is playing against the artificial opponent.

Much has been said in informal reviews posted on networks and bulletin boards concerning the game's AI. Suffice it enough to say that the AI offers sufficient challenge for beginners and inexperienced players. It is sufficiently proficient at exploiting weak points in a player's "center" and utilizing the strategic redeployment, but it is not as nimble is calculating when to press the advantage. For example, it is so aggressive that it will tend to keep

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1st August 1992

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New directions are sometimes difficult to take, especially when those directions quite often force you to push against prevailing tides.

Such is the case with **R.A.W. Entertainment**. In an industry where it's the publisher that counts, not the product, it's been difficult for us to break into the larger retail store and wholesale markets. That has made our titles hard to find sometimes, and for that I apologize. I would like to thank those distributors and mail-order companies that have supported us during this first year, however.

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Remember, for those of you unable to find our titles, you can order direct from us here at **RAW**. Just send us a U.S. check or money order for the MSRP, and we'll send you the title you request. We will pay the ground shipping anywhere in the continental U.S.

I would like to thank each of you who have purchased one or more of our current titles **(Action Stations! -- and the add-on, Blitzkrieg, Fireteam 2200, Napoleon I, White Death and Worlds at War)** and to the many who have contacted us with ideas and suggestions for products. Your letters and phone calls have kept us going in this first year.

I would like to thank all of our programmers and design teams around the world working their tails off to bring us our next generation of titles **(Spoils of War, Dominant Species, Space Inc., Fleet Commander, Struggle for Guadalcanal)** and those products, without titles as yet, that will be available during 1993.

The first year of operation has been interesting to say the least, and once again I would like to thank you, the consumer, for your support. I hope we can reward you with quality product that offers play-value in the form of solid gameplay. We know you will let us know if we do not do that. I would not wish it any other way!

Yours Faithfully,

John Ingram
President,
R.A.W. ENTERTAINMENT, INC.

throwing units at a key point when it could weaken that point by attempting an end run and forcing the defender to spread out. On other occasions, it will attempt to breach an enemy's front, even when only one or two units can do so. Naturally, said units are cannon fodder on the enemy's very next turn. Further, the artificial opponent tends to overbuild during the early seasons of the year and be especially vulnerable to all-out offensives during the latter seasons of the year.

Another complaint against the artificial opponent is that it is slow. Though **Avalon Hill** thoughtfully provided a sliding scale by which gamers can speed-up the AI's pace (at the cost of competence, as in many computer chess programs), it does get frustrating to watch the computer spend as much time "cogitating" over a winter season construction phase when it does not have enough Basic Resource Points to build more than one unit as it does when it has all of its BRPs during the spring season construction phase.

Diplomacy with a Bayonet

Computer Third Reich is a very welcome computer game for those of us who have always wanted to play *3R*, but could never find opponents or gather up the courage to play the experienced wizards at the local or national game conventions. It allows one to become acquainted with the basic mechanics of this classic (and thought-provoking) system without becoming bogged down by those mechanics when one is ready to play. The artificial opponent is just good enough to afford a couple of solid games for each scenario and the campaign game as a whole, before one is ready to lay it to waste like Hitler ripped through Poland. Experienced players should only purchase the game if they wish to play it in "play-by-mail" competitions. *C3R* is ideal for sending turns by mail on saved game disks with one exception, players will have to work out in advance how to handle the dialogue boxes for air interdiction. So, anyone ready to, as von Ribbentrop accused the Polish ambassador in March of '39, conduct diplomacy with a bayonet, should probably consider *C3R* as a viable option.

Searching for DF0:

An astute Amiga owner on GEnie suggested the following fix for any Amiga users who were tired of having to work out of the DF) drive. S. Emerson suggested that gamers use Newzap or another sector editor to open up the reich.prg file on their user disk (not the master disk). Then, they should type **search for df0:** (Warning: Make sure the colon is typed.) Next, they should replace every occurance of DF0: with C3R: and exit.

Now, by writing a script into the start-up file, as follows, one can install the program on a hard disk:

assign c3r: (path/name of where the disk contents are) stack 10000 cd c3r: reich.prg. CGW

Where Angels Fear to Tread

A Replay of Dan Bunten's "Global Conquest"

"In the kingdom of four-player games, the person with three phone lines shall be king."

by Roger White

Computers can talk to each other, but few computer games take advantage of this. It's even rarer to find a computer game that talks to many other computers and becomes a multiplayer, multimachine game. This is what *Global Conquest* is: an up-to-four-player, strategic-level wargame that is played by connecting up to four PC-compatible computers. It's also a game that shows why multi-machine gaming is still rare — the task of making a four player game happen is still an elaborate one. *Global Conquest* can be played with less than four human players (none, actually, are required), but this replay had the ultimate: the four human players combatting each other in the same, on-line game.

The first task in setting up four player Global Conquest is finding the computer that will be the "host." The host is the computer that is equipped with three COM ports and connects to three other computers by either direct connection or phone line. Host candidates are not found, they're made. This author transformed his LAN file server into a host by adding a COM board and booting it as a DOS machine rather than a file server. COM1 connected directly to the PC that normally acts as the LAN workstation, COM3 connected to a modem controlling my phone line, and COM4 connected to a modem that was connected with a long extension cord to the next door neighbor's phone line (the mouse ran COM2).

The next challenge is common to bridge, doubles tennis and any other four player game: finding the fourth player. Two enthusiasts can usually find a third quickly, but that fourth player always takes a search. Rustling up fourths for *Global Conquest* is greatly aided by access to an electronic forum of enthusiasts such as Compuserve's *Modem Games Forum* or a gamer's BBS. A side benefit of finding players on an electronic forum is that anyone who uses an electronic forum also knows how to use a modem.

Game Parameters

Making three modem connections happen in quick succession is like saying "Peter Piper picked . . ." three times fast — other players should applaud the host person when the connecting process is completed. Here are some hints to smooth the connection process out:

1) Call and coordinate on voice with all the players just before attempting the connection. Let them know what order they will be called in. Confirm their modem phone number and the baud rate to be used. Tell them how long they should wait before they should try calling you to find out what has happened.

2) Call the most patient player first. This person will have to endure watching a connection that does nothing for up to five minutes while the other connections are being made.

3) In the real world of telecommunications things rarely work right the first time. This is real-world telecommunications amplified three fold. Expect that set-up will take a while. Rule of thumb: allow a half hour of set-up time for the game and add a half-hour for each player that the host has never made a modem connection with before. If this is the initial try at being a host, test each modem connection locally the day before the big event.

4) The host player must select to be the Amber (Yellow) player. Furthermore, none of the "guest" players can select to be Amber. They will be Cyan, Magenta and Ocre, in that order, as they are connected into the host.

Global Conquest's scenario designer is one of the most elaborate in current commercial game design, and designing a scenario is perhaps 25% of playing the game. Ironically, this important feature isn't "democratic" in four player play: the host player is the only one that can select a scenario, any scenarios chosen by the guest players simply won't matter. So, if one is going to be host player, it may be wise to spend some pre-game time describing or negotiating the scenario with fellow players.

All players have a limited amount of attention and skill which they can apply to the challenge of playing the game. The choices made in building a scenario determine how that attention is distributed between the various aspects of the game such as: mastering the rules, interacting with other people and interacting with the "special events" that the game can dish out.

The basic choice is between using player attention to play against the computer or using it to play against the other players. In a solo game, there is no choice to be made: all the attention is devoted to playing the computer. In the four player game, however, the host player/scenario designer has to make a choice.

For instance, if Wild Cards are chosen, a player gets to devote attention to dealing with, say, Dyslexic Virus where right and left are switched. The attention devoted to mastering right-for-left switching is attention that can't be devoted to negotiating a plan with Player B to drive Player C from a strategic city. The simpler the scenario and the more familiar its features are to the players, the more time they will devote to playing against each other rather than playing against the scenario's environment.

"Fuse selection" (the method in which the end of the planning phase is determined) will indicate how much diplomacy can take place. If the fuse is short and triggered by the first player hitting the execute button, there will be little diplomacy. If the fuse is long or the turn length fixed, players will have time to "chat" and engage in diplomacy.

Finally, in four player games, one human player is going to start losing ground very quickly. If this person hangs up, though, the game ends. If a long scenario is planned, it is vital to pick people who won't need their gaming line for something else, once they lose.

This is the annotated history of a four-player game of Global Conquest. First, let us introduce the players as they hunkered down over their screens-and-mice for this epic game.

In the Amber corner sits Richard Blocveteran of uncounted games of *Strategic Conquest, Command HQ* and now, *Global Conquest.* Richard's style is a deadly combination of stealth and diplomacy. The simplicity of this scenario will favor his tireless efforts at coalition-forming. The open visibility will hinder his stealth activities, however.

In the Magenta corner, Roger-Tzu runs through his ritual mouse-moving and clicking pre-game exercises. Roger-Tzu wrote the book on *Command HQ* and developed the "Cap Kill" strategy in that game to a high art. He goes for fast growth in the early game and has a reputation for snatching victories out of hopeless-looking situations.

In the Ocher corner, dimly visible, is Skulker — *Global Conquest* playtester and master of the 2023 scenario in *Command HQ.* The simplicity of this scenario will grate on him, but his long experience with

Global Conquest and *Command HQ* (plus the fact that he's a programmer in "real life") will help him locate every possible technical advantage the scenario offers.

In the Cyan corner is Jeff Beutler — another *GC* play tester and a man with a play style that makes pit bulls look like pacifists.

The Setup

Richard's (Amber) comments: During city selection, I'm looking for a close cluster of cities so I can have a good defense, but as I'm picking my third city, I notice that the island near Ocher's Metroplex (corner city) isn't occupied by anyone, so I take the big city there. In retrospect, a big mistake: I hadn't fully considered the large armada that was likely to come out of the Ocher Metroplex early in the game.

Early moves and alliances. Note Skulker's strength is in the north, Roger-Tzu's in the south. The capitol is under the stack of native units shaped like a plus sign ('+').

Roger's (Magenta) comments: The land mass is far from my Metroplex, so the cities I pick must be mutually supporting. I start with a city in the south near some cross-shaped swamps. Cross-shaped swamps are sure to have oil fields in them. As city selection continues, no one is contesting me in the area so I get a tight cluster of cities on the south end of the main land mass. There are three oil fields and three neutral cities nearby and I'm isolated from the northern part of the main land mass by a neutral city and the capitol. This starting position is an excellent one all around where I can clear the natives out of the south end of the island, then move north to engage the others. I plan to bring a big fleet up the east side of the island to provide support.

Skulker (Ocher)'s comments: As a straight-forward "beat up on your neighbors" scenario with full visibility, I must fight, at least, two of the other players and it's best if I can pick a fight with the 3rd. The challenge is doing this without having my units chewed up. Diplomatically, my best hope is attacking Jeff because Roger and Richard are within yelling distance of each other and they play together a lot.

I start with a city on the north side of the main island and then pick others to cluster around my initial start, making sure no one concentrates on the isles near my Metroplex in the upper-right corner. Roger clusters on the south end of the island and the natives control the middle. Richard and Jeff are intermingled in the northwest portion of the island — including, somehow ,sharing Omaha at the start. Richard holds one city on the isle nearest my Metroplex.

Skulker breaks his alliance with Richard and sweeps up the cities of St. Paul and Madison in the north. Note in the inset map that Skulker's fleet is heading for Jeff's Metroplex.

Jeff's (Cyan) Comments: I decide to go for control of the cities on the north side of the big island. I will cluster my cities there and expand my holdings to cover the entire north area. I want the cities in the north-east corner, in particular. They are better developed (economically) than those on the upper left and more of them are inland cities (making them less vulnerable to sea assault). I'm not going to have a strong navy in the area soon because my Metroplex was is so far away.

Once I have control of the north, I will gain ground by moving forces south until the whole island is mine. I'm not going to make alliances with anyone — this way I can get points quickly by killing them all. I will also do my best to prevent a two-on-one situation from developing.

The trouble began right away, though. I'm not able to get the northeast cities as Ocher beats me to them. I go for the northwest cities instead. This puts me between Ocher and Amber, but I hope I can hold out and protect what I have until later in the game.

Sound Off (The Game Log)

Note: The turns in a Global Conquest *game are numbered in descending order.*

Turn 30 Amber (Richard): Uh, Oh! The computer has assigned an army of mine and Jeff's (Cyan) both to Omaha at the start! My army loses the battle for Omaha which leaves me weak in the center. I find my lone unit in Albany, on the island near Skulker's Metroplex, is hanging in the breeze and Skulker is moving on it.

Turn 30 Magenta (Roger): Alone on the south end of the island, I blitz for the nearby resources to begin building my economic base and offer alliances to everyone. Since I'm going to be concentrating on killing off the natives for a few turns, alliances will give me an economic boost.

Turn 30 Ocher (Skulker): The starting positions make Richard (Amber) & Jeff (Cyan) the obvious initial opponents. In particular, I plan to eliminate the threat posed by Jeff.

Turn 30 Cyan (Jeff): My position looks bad. I'm split and surrounded by enemies, but Richard (Amber) is also starting in a bad situation, so it could be worse.

Turns 29-26 Amber: I send my Albany unit south to escape from Skulker's (Ocher) Metroplex force, but I lose it and the burb (*GC*'s generic term for all urban areas). With the "instant" loss of Omaha, Albany and their respective units, my position in this game is now a pile of lemons. I would resign here and now, if it were possible to do so without upsetting the rest of the game. Instead, I try peace overtures to Skulker (Ocher) and Jeff (Cyan). Neither respond immediately, but I finally set up an alliance with Skulker. I battle with Jeff for northeast cities while Skulker sends a "human wave" army of infantry after me (one of his favorite tactics). I try to make a stand in Madison, but I feel as if Custer and I suddenly have a lot in common.

Turns 29-26 Magenta: Jeff (Cyan) is bee-lining an invasion armada from his Metroplex to the south end of the island, my end! Richard (Amber) is tied down in the north fighting Jeff and Skulker (Ocher), so my first contest will be holding Jeff off: a one-on-one situation where he faces all of my army with only half of his army. Excellent! Skulker is assembling an impressive northern-island presence. This will be a force to be reckoned with soon enough.

Turns 29-26 Ocher: Richard flees Albany. I send my navy to kill him at sea, while an infantry unit takes the city. Whatever units Albany builds, I will send to take out Jeff's Metroplex to the south. I make an alliance with Richard, while I pound on Jeff and take the mineral sites between Jeff, Richard and myself.

I send the Navy to the southern part of the main island to sponge a few points off of Jeff's invaders headed there from his Metroplex. After I've taken the minerals and my cities have had a chance to build some additional units, I move forces east and downgrade my alliance with Richard to a ceasefire. His head will be next on the block.

Turns 29-26 Cyan: Richard has elected to team up with Skulker and wipe me out. I'm not sure why he would decide to do this. It would make more sense to work with me to try to weaken the stronger opponent. Instead he's taking losses attacking me while the stronger player, Skulker, is chasing us both out of the region.

Turns 25-21 Amber: With the fall of Madison, my chances of a conventional victory fall to nil; I spend the rest of the game conducting guerrilla warfare against Skulker.

Turns 25-21 Magenta: I'm suffering from "Native Disease," spending

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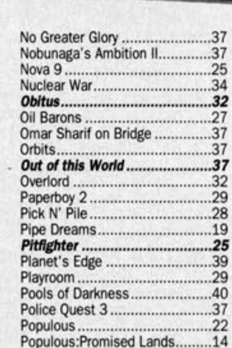
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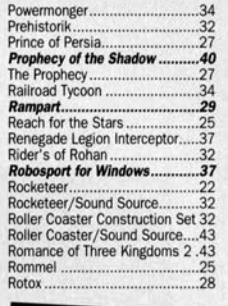
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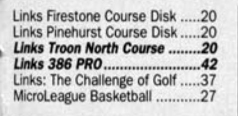
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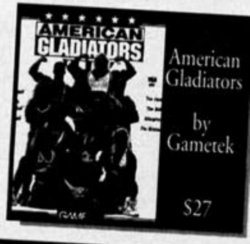
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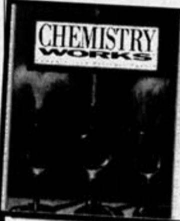
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Circle Reader Service #79

too much time and resources fighting natives. Because I'm still attacking natives while beating Jeff off the south part of the main island, my points are getting sucked down. Skulker is helping attack Jeff, which means that he's getting points and keeping them! Skulker has mustered an impressive north island army and is sweeping Jeff and Richard before him. Richard is switching to a raiding strategy. Jeff, who is point leader, decides to duke it out with Skulker and keep racking up points.

Turns 25-21 Ocher: I break the ceasefire with Richard and start slogging through his cities while I take Jeff's remaining city on the main island. I send a naval task force to take out Jeff's Metroplex. (He has become everybody's enemy since he has built up a sizable point lead). I send the rest of my navy north to support ongoing operations on the main island.

Turns 20-16 Magenta: Jeff is all but wiped out and Skulker is sending an invasion force toward Jeff's Metroplex. I send a bigger force slightly behind Skulker's to wipe out both Jeff's and Skulker's forces and thus gain a bunch of points at *both* their expenses. I send two transports to raid behind Skulker's lines. One dies at sea, the other sneaks off for either Albany or Skulker's Metroplex.

Richard and I are now teammates. We decide to make a stand at Omaha on the north west corner of the island. I feint an attack with Omaha's defending troops on Memphis, then move them back. Skulker moves for Omaha with blitzed troops from St. Paul and the vanguard is massacred on the outskirts of the city—one small victory for Roger . . . However, Skulker has just too many forces in the area. Consequently, my counter attack out of Omaha suffers heavily.

Turns 20-16 Ocher: I fight against Richard for Memphis, his last city on the main isle. The task force arrives at Jeff's Metroplex and starts to bombard the sole infantry defender there. Jeff builds a sub to defend his Metroplex. I move my battleships in close to keep the sub away from my transport and further soften up the land opposition. My infantry blitzes down the side of the "board" and into the Metroplex.

Meanwhile Roger has dropped our alliance and is sending a large naval force to stomp on this, my besieging task force. Just as I take out Jeff, Roger's fleet arrives to start sieging my forces at Jeff's former Metroplex. I've gone from besieger to besieged very rapidly and hole up in my newly conquered corner.

Turns 20-16 Cyan: Skulker can wipe out either Richard or myself. He decides to finish me off first, however, because I have a higher point total. I have only my Metroplex left, so it's time to assemble the MBD ("Metroplex Bunker Defense") task force. The MBD force will consist of a single land unit and as many subs as I can build. Skulker's battleships will do so much damage bombarding any defending land units I build there that I won't win by battling his land forces as they cross the docks of the Metroplex. Instead, I need to quick-kill his incoming transports before they can even touch the shore. To do that, I need subs. I spend my banked cash to build submarines as quickly as possible.

I'm able to wipe out two of Skulker's battleships, but I can't cut through to the infantry transport. If my last sub had started on the north side of the Metroplex instead of the west side, I would have had a chance. I saw Roger coming behind Skulker with a mass of stuff but Roger didn't have any land units in his bunch, so I just needed to sink that one infantry transport unit of Skulker's to buy enough time. It didn't happen and I am, therefore, knocked out of the game. I become a spectator and formulate plans for the next game.

"Neutral" half time

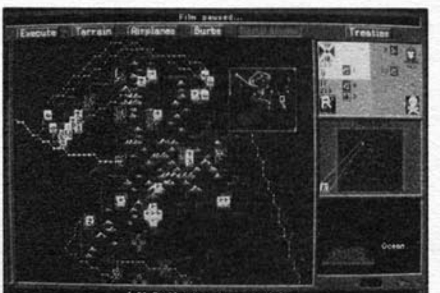
Commentary from Magenta:

Skulker is clearly in a winning position. I'm the only one with an army left to face Skulker, but he outscores me in points by two-to-one. Jeff has the highest score, but he's is about to disappear entirely. Richard is third in the game's point totals, but he has no army left with which to collect more points, and he soon be joining that vast "dead unit pile in the sky." There are two possibilities for me to defeat Skulker: 1) I can swallow enough of his behind-the-line cities to disrupt his economic base, and then defeat him in some big battles on the main island to rack up an

astounding number of points, or 2) I can use another way to win that doesn't concern itself with point scores.

That other way turns out to be an obscure rule: if a player controls all four of the corner Metroplexes, *plus* the native capital, he or she wins no matter *what* scoring option has been selected for the scenario. While Richard and I play on, we have a friend of ours, Marty, research the documentation.

Turns 15-11 Amber: Roger and I work out the final Cap Kill strategy, and a technique for insuring that Roger gets all the quickness bonuses: Roger hits "Execute" immediately and I wait until he is really finished before I hit "Execute." It's a downright devious plan, but all is fair in love and war(games). In the meantime, I send infantry units out of my Metroplex, either to raid the north shore of the main island or to reinforce Roger's defenses there.



Albany has just fallen to Roger; Jeff's Metroplex is about to fall. The battle for Omaha is raging and will continue to do so for another five turns. Richard is raiding for Detroit while Roger raids for Frankfort and Skulker's Metroplex

Turns 15-11 Magenta: Albany falls to me! I quickly get the battleship that Skulker had almost completed there. This battleship moves on with the infantry to take Skulker's home Metroplex. Jeff Beutler's former Metroplex falls while the Omaha battle rages on. My second Omaha sally is met and bested by massive Ocher reinforcements; Skulker has me on the run here, so the remainder of my assaulting force retreats.

Skulker responds to one of my raids with a beautifully timed rescue of Frankfort, but he loses his own Metroplex at the same time. That gives me three of the four Metroplexes. I'm on my way to fulfilling the alternate victory conditions. I instantly dispatch an infantry unit from Roger's former Metroplex to my ally Richard's metroplex to arrange a "bloodless coup" there (with his consent) and go for the "big win."

Omaha stands but Skulker is "braid" attacking, meaning that only one defender at a time is taking damage and returning fire. He will win if I don't bring in enough reinforcements to thwart this braid attack technique of his. I'm moving money into the town to bolster the defense there by rapidly purchasing units and using the "teammate" control level to move one of Richard's Amber infantries in too.

Turns 15-11 Ocher:

Roger and Richard are allying and ganging up on me. Good! If I survive it will man a lot of points. I plan to just hold onto the main island, fight them back and maintain my lead in points. I lose Albany and will be losing Jeff's Metroplex and my own Metroplex. too. Suddenly, I'm holding onto just the central island. What are Roger and Richard thinking?

Turns 10-6 Magenta:

Things still look pretty hopeless, but I carry on. My "grand fleet" that wiped out Jeff and Skulker's forces at Jeff Beutler Metroplex moves north through the eastern seas trying to catch Skulker's "Ochre Armada" fleet in a decisive engagement. I'm assembling a mixed force in the northeast cities I took from Skulker. A "nick 'o time" build of mine saves Springfield from a Skulker raider. Sometimes luck does smile upon old Roger-Tzu.

Marty confirms the rule stating that holding all the Metroplexes and the Capital is a surefire victory condition. I go into a classic, patented

"Roger-Tzu Cap Kill Mode" and all forces now have one of two tasks: 1) advance on Little Rock (the planetary capital and home of **Ozark Softscape** — some coincidence, huh?) or 2) go raiding into Skulker's burbs behind the lines to distract his attention from my real goal. I start using my treasury and the support-moving feature to build additional infantry armies in my cities south of the Little Rock, gearing up the the cap kill.

Richard declares war briefly so that I can take his Metroplex, the fourth and final one I need. I also start picking up Quickness Bonuses by letting Richard be the last mover, rather than the first. The Northeast force moves for Detroit and captures it from the west side of the island.

Richard is foiled from taking Memphis by a stubborn submarine captain of Skulker's. The submarine takes damage until a relieving infantry shows up. This was Richard's last hope of holding a city after giving his Metroplex to me. Richard follows Jeff into oblivion (*sic transit gloria* Richard).

Turns 10-6 Ocher: I have 437 points versus 209 for Richard and 186 for Roger. I think this is an unsurpassable lead. With a dozen infantry units in the north half of the main isle, I have little to worry about. Richard is offering to be teammates with me. I decline because it's just too risky. It would allow him to move my units into Roger's jaws. [Note from Richard: this offer was purely a distraction tactic. We were trying to keep Skulker busy thinking about other things while we developed our "something else" plan to capture the Metroplexes and Capital.]

Turn 6 Ocher: I think I'm losing ground, but I should hold onto Omaha with no problem. There are four infantry armies, three subs and two battleships defending it. It will take a heck of a seige for Roger to get it.

Turn 5 Magenta: All my forces make their move for the capital. The die is cast.

Turn 5 Ocher: Richard will go down this turn!

Turn 4 Magenta: My main fleet finally catches up with Ocher's main fleet just off of Omaha; the long-sought decisive naval engagement begins. Unfortunately, Ocher has reinforced his fleet and my fleet gets mauled badly. Fortunately, it's unimportant. This "trick Trafalgar tactic" was only a distraction to keep Skulker from moving up to blunt my attack on Little Rock. The sounds which immeninate from an AdLib compatible sound card during a naval battle always makes players zoom in to look at it. It is a horrendous cacophony. I'm hoping that Skulker doesn't look back too quickly.

Turn 4 Ocher: The score is 612 for me versus 325 for Roger. The game is in the bag, particularly since Roger has run into natives again and his score is going down.

Turn 3 Magenta: Skulker finally understands the capitol threat and blitzes all his nearby units for the capital but it looks like the distractions have paid off and he's going to be too late. It's going to be tough for him to get through to Little Rock — his access to the capital is hampered by native forces in intervening cities north of the capital. If he doesn't make it through, I will snatch a victory out from under his nose.

Turn 3 Ocher: Ah ha! Roger is trying to take Little Rock and win that way. I'm blitzing all available forces outside of the capital to reinforce it if it looks ready to fall.

Turn 2 Ocher: I'm waiting for Roger to get most of the native defenders out of the way before I intervene in the capital. I have one infantry waiting until the second half of the turn to move into a corner of Little Rock. I'm having it wait for half a turn in the hopes that when it arrives it will survive there until the end of this turn. It is all a question of survival right now. Whew, the unit made it without a single pulse to spare! I think Roger's brilliantly planned coup has been foiled at the last possible moment.

Turn 1 Magenta: In yet another display of timing wizardry, Skulker weaves forces through the gaps between the northern native forces and keeps Little Rock neutral, even though I've finished off the last of the native defenders. Cities only change control when in possession of a *single* player and, since we are fighting over control of it, it will remain loyal to its previous owner, the natives.

Turn 1 Ocher: I rush all nearby forces into Little Rock to make sure it doesn't fall. (I made a mistake last turn and two units were "R"epeating the wrong move!) At the game's end, I won on points with 759 to Roger's 291.

Conclusions:

Amber: A lone city hanging out isn't good idea against human players. Computer players will seldom bother one but other humans, rightly, see it as easy pickings. In this scenario, concentration of force is everything.

Magenta: The speed with which the other human players got into point acquisition caught me off guard. In games with computer opponents, I can take time to build a large city base by attacking the natives first, then use that economic base to wipe out the computer opponents. In this game, that strategy was leaving my point count far behind everyone else's.

Ocher: The ending was closer than I anticipated. Then again, Roger is very good at developing surprise endings, so I really should not be too surprised after all. I was almost distracted too long, but managed to save the win by some fast action during the last three turns of the game.

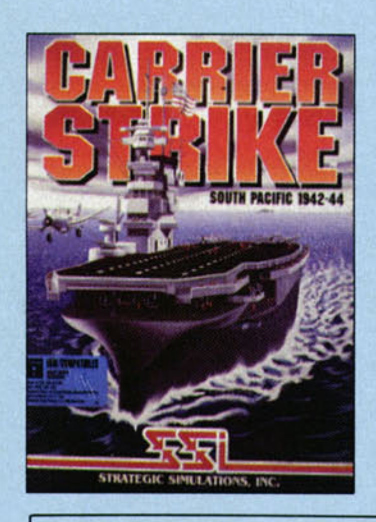
Cyan: In hindsight, it might have been better to try and compete with Roger for control of the south part of the island. When Richard started working with Skulker it really surprised me and led to my early departure from the game. It also made Richard a non-factor in the game. He was too weak to stop his former teammate when Skulker turned on him. I thought the game could have been won by Roger. He had the advantage in cities but he lost points on an alliance he really didn't need. Skulker was able to take advantage of the play of others and secure a nice victory for himself. CGW



So, Exactly How Much Do Anchors Aweigh?

A Review Sortie of SSI's *Carrier Strike*

by Alan "Kamikaze" Emrich



TITLE: Carrier Strike
SYSTEM: IBM
PLAYERS: 0-2 (at the same computer only)
PRICE: $59.95
PROTECTION: Document Look-Up
DESIGNER: Gary Grigsby
MUSIC: Donald Griffin
PUBLISHER: Strategic Simulations, Inc. Sunnyvale, CA

Some games lend themselves to instant categorization; i.e., this game is a winner, that game is a loser. Not so in the case of *Carrier Strike*, the welcome new operational level WWII Pacific Theater game from once prolific wargame publisher SSI. Instead, designer Gary Grigsby has created a package with a depth that goes beyond mere first impressions (be they good or ill) and require serious further examination of a subject presented so carefully in this game. While not as wide or deep as the ocean its battles are fought over, *Carrier Strike* requires a sounding of depth and wide search pattern in order to be reviewed properly.

Carrier "Front"

Using the same interface as his previous two games, *Second Front* and *Western Front*, the first impression I had looking at the screen display was "What is this, *Carrier Front*?" The same laborious menu structuring that is so clunky-yet-familiar-to-Grigsby-Gaming-Fans is back again to ease system veterans into play, complete with mouse support. With the exception of adding clouds (which range in intensity from fluffy white to threatening dark gray), a player could swear this was another *Front* game by zooming the map to its two different scales.

Skip Basic Training

The interface déjà vu aside, carrier warfare remains a different animal than land warfare, so many players will seek initial enlightenment from the game's tutorial. Unfortunately, this proves to be a bad move. The tutorial is poorly written, cumbersome and *far* less than complete. It says so much to accomplish so little that its most redeeming feature might be that it is buried on page 48 of the 120+ page manual. Hopefully, players will have tried to learn the game the "hard way" which, in the case of *Carrier Strike* turned out to be the *easy* way.

Fortunately, the interface is reasonably intuitive and it won't be long before planes are flying, bombs are dropping and carriers are burning in silhouette against the beautiful Pacific sunset. Actually, the ease at which play proceeds (once the system is mastered) lends much to recommend this game. Whole battles can be decided in less than an evening and entire campaigns in about 10-15 hours.

Control Freaks Need Not Apply

More akin to an SSG wargame than a traditional SSI wargame, players take on more of a "command perspective" when issuing orders to their units. Each individual piece is not controlled by the player, being moved hex-by-hex as if the player's hand were some god's. Instead, one can order the direction of task force movement, split and combine those task forces (within fairly strict limits), send out the search planes from carriers (including setting the centerline of the search arc from each carrier) and form, as well as launch carrier groups. This latter operation is handled remarkably smoothly on a "flat top" interface screen, allowing players to move individual planes or whole squadrons to fuel, arm (there is a variety of ordnance available), take the elevators up to the flight deck (or down again) and then launch (or land) airplanes. Capacities limiting all of these functions are neatly represented through pie graphs and create an effective combination of realism and ease of play.

Players *cannot* control the operations of land-based air forces nor move individual flying aircraft willy-nilly in expedient flight patterns like some deranged politician gerrymandering a map. Instead, the player is the *fleet* commander, not the supreme commander of all forces in the area. Forming up strikes, launching them, assigning search planes and CAP (Combat Air Patrol) missions is an almost effortless exercise, leaving players to concentrate on difficult decisions rather than difficult procedures. This system will certainly disappoint the control freaks, but I found it quite compatible with what I was looking for in a game on this subject. I heartily approve of the way command decisions are handled in *Carrier Strike*. (It's too bad a "control freak" toggle couldn't be set to appease the alienated wargamers out there by allowing them more deified capabilities during game play).

Something New From Grigsby: Graphics and Sound!

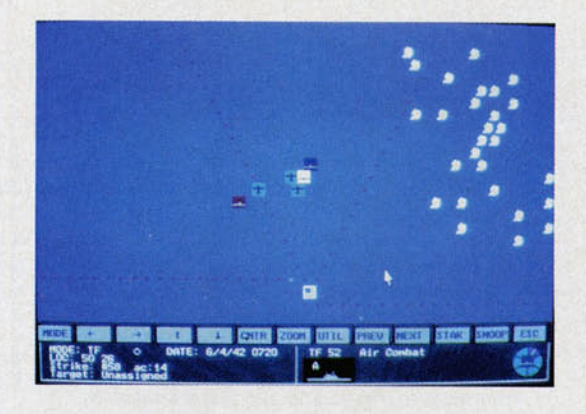
As a welcome addition to the ever growing stable (staple?) of Gary Grigsby designs are more graphic interludes and some real sound support. Now, this isn't *The Perfect General* or *Patton Strikes Back*, brother wargamers, but the nice (albeit 16-color) VGA screens showing fleets and airbases (particularly when they are attacked) add an awful lot for those who are used to Gary's *Front* games. These graphics are likely to pale in comparison to SSG's long awaited IBM release of *Carriers at War* with its heavy emphasis on state-of-the-art graphics support, but so what? The look of *Carrier Strike* is a big step forward and one we want to encourage more of the same from the crew who launched this title.

Adding to the enjoyment was an inspired, militaristic opening theme (another first for an SSI wargame). The music was created by newcomer Donald Griffin of *Computer Music Consulting* (who was inadvertently left off the manual credits). Sound effects, too, have been added, with enough torpedo splashes, bombs dropping and ack-ack sounds to keep one's ears tuned into the game. Unfortunately, the *SoundBlaster* support was hard-coded into IRQ7, leaving many owners to receive their sound effects from their PC speaker.

The Usual Unusual Features

What new computer game would be complete without the occasional unusual "feature" being found in it? In *Carrier Strike*, it is difficult to get a feel for the various operational

ranges of one's strike forces except through trial and error. Many a strike will be launched against targets that every man-jack in the crew knows didn't have a snowball's chance of reaching the sighted enemy, only to go out, head back and have many of the planes splash down in the drink *en route.* Even more annoying is to have search planes, *who should know better* (particularly since they are controlled by the game's artificial intelligence, once launched), not quite making it back to their carriers and getting a bit wet under the wings as their pilots try to coast their way home on fumes. While it is difficult to say if these features are, in fact, bugs, they certainly *feel* like them and, in my opinion, perceived realism is all that matters to most wargamers.

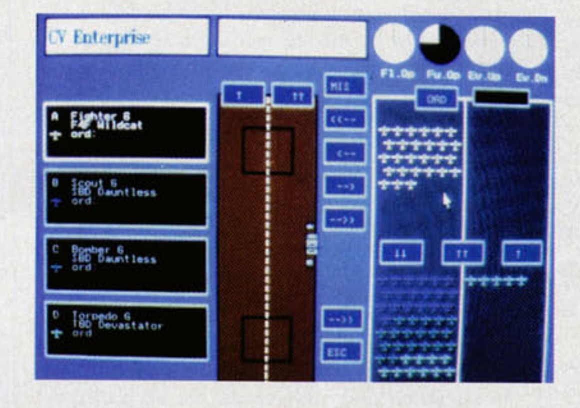


Harboring the Docs

Save for the tutorial, the documentation does such a thorough job of explaining the game that special kudos are in order. While the game plays easier than the docs actually *read,* any gamer who takes a special interest in this game will find a wealth of information to be garnered from a closer examination of the documentation. The docs come replete with a comprehensive Table of Contents, tons of tables and formulae used in the game's programming, maps and detailed information on all of the ships and planes (complete with their armor and armament). A fine historical article by Martin Campion fleshes out a sound, complete set of wargame rules reference notes.

Campaigning

The great forte of *Carrier Strike,* besides its quick, clean play, is the ability to link battles together to form a campaign game. Each campaign game consists of several month-long turns where players are given an intelligence estimate of enemy activities and both side's forces (the enemy forces are, of course, estimated by the amount of activity expected). Players will have the opportunity to sortie out that month and risk their fleets (ships damaged in battle might be many months before being repaired and those sunk



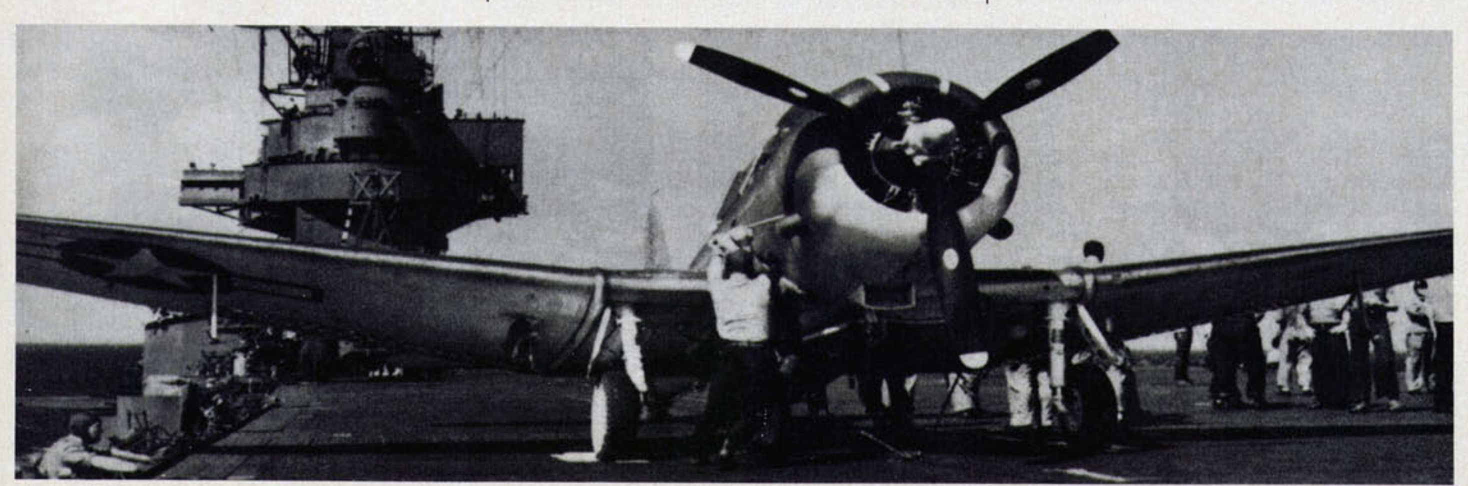
are out for the rest of the war) or to sit and wait for additional strength, forfeiting campaign points in the process. In all, the campaign is a fast, riveting little system that will keep *Carrier Strike* fresh for quite a while and give it plenty of replayability.

For those who were expecting to see an epic campaign game covering the entire war in the Pacific, land and sea, for all of WWII, don't worry. That game is still forthcoming and very much appears to be a combination of the *Front* games and *Carrier Strike.* One might venture to say that "Grigsby's Grognards" will be able to drive right into this one with nary a glance at the documentation.

For those who are interested, an experimental version (1.1x) of *Carrier Strike* is available on **GEnie** (file #4825 on the Games RoundTable). It adds an extended memory function which reduces the amount of disk access time for owners of extended memory, increases the chance for airplane landing damage based on flight time (to penalize the overly strong second and third strikes which can occur in the game) and puts up a screen between the American player phase and the combat phase during a two-player option (hiding information from the Japanese player). Presumably, the results of these experiments will appear both in a potential later version of *Carrier Strike* and in Gary's pacific theater wargame.

A Wing and a Prayer

There's no doubt in my mind that *Carrier Strike* is only getting the full attention it deserves because of the high expectation level created by the impending release of *Carriers at War* from SSG. *Carrier Strike* is likely to be overshadowed by that game's release, and that is too bad. Quite simply, the campaign feature alone makes *Carrier Strike* unique among its peers. This, combined with its quick playing time and thorough docs will beckon for a rightful place for this game on a player's shelf. Frankly, no matter how many shots are taken at this game, it has a durability that always seems to bring it in for a safe landing. CGW



Fleet Commander

by Commander Alan Zimm

Commander Alan Zimm is the designer of Action Stations!, *a tremendously accurate and realistic command simulation of World War II naval combat, extremely well-rated by our readers in spite of its lack of graphic chrome. In this article, Alan shares the life experiences and design considerations that led to the development of* Action Stations! *as well as his upcoming* Fleet Commander. *Last issue, we concentrated on the rise of* Action Stations! *This issue,. Commander Zimm presents his initial ideas for* Fleet Commander.

July 1987: London, England

I've been assigned to brief the results of some analytical work to CINCUSNAVEUR. One of the advantages of an occasional trip to London is the chance to visit Foyle's, one of the world's greatest bookstores. I visited with one of my English correspondents over dinner. He gave me a translation of the German Kreigsmarine investigation into the loss of the *Graf Spee.* It seems that they attributed the defeat to poor battery management, just as reflected in the simulation when I had modeled the River Platte scenario! And, to top it off, he managed to unravel the problem of the rate-of-fire calculation — it seems that the Leander class ammunition hoists were slower than the minimum fire interval of the gun mount, effectively limiting the rate of fire to about 75% of the designed rate of fire of the gun turret. I'll bet that when we plug in that lower ROF, the hit rate in the simulation will be dead on.

August 1987: Washington, D.C.

Dead on. I am now ready to set some objectives for the simulation. Lots of reasons. First, by modeling the system fundamentally (rather than abstractly), we give the player more to think about. Pending the creation of a fully comprehensive virtual reality in a computer, we have to recognize that 99.9% of the fantasy is created in the mind of the player. Graphics help, and sound helps, but that is basically of transitory attraction. (How many disabled the bridge-building animation in *Railroad Tycoon* after seeing it only a few short times?) The environment is triggered in the player's mind by creating a world of sufficient detail that behaves like the real world and is self-consistent.

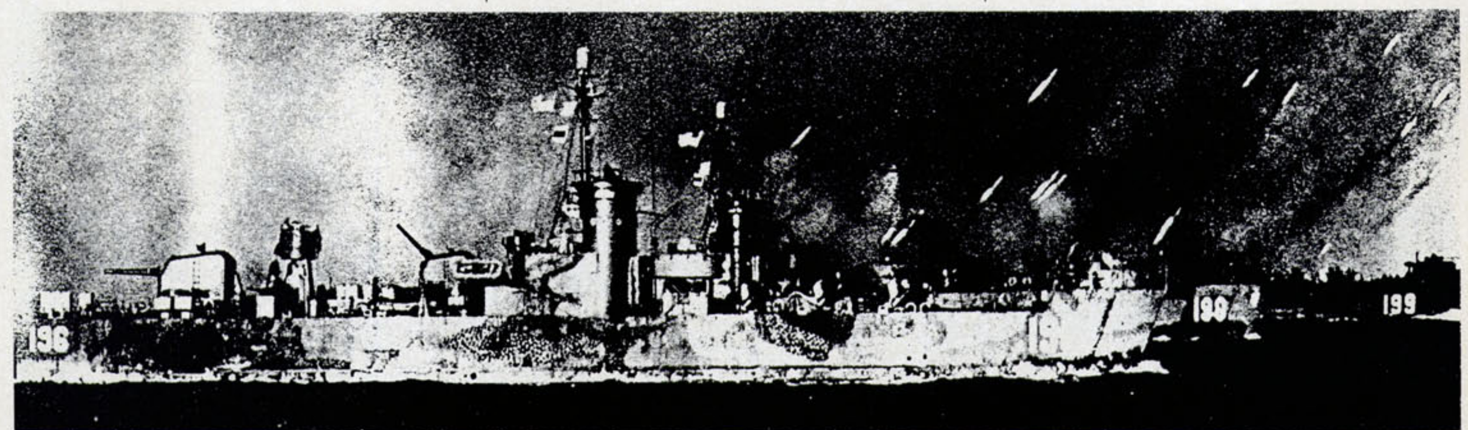
Second, by modeling the system fundamentally, one allows the player to explore alternatives realistically. One of the things learned from *Action Stations!* was that, no matter how much thought was put in to anticipating what players *would* do, someone out there would try something bizarre, unique, unprecedented and probably unsanitary. Low-resolution models can't handle every low-order mental detonation inspired by the teenager in us all. If a result is generated that is obviously incorrect or inconsistent with the fantasy world the programmer has worked so hard to create, the fantasy world in the mind of the player is broken and the entire simulation loses credibility. Low-resolution modeling is subject to these breaks. If created properly, high-resolution modeling can handle the bizarre and reward or penalize unusual efforts in accordance with their merits.

One of the biggest problems with high-resolution modeling is the display of data. Assume an air search program accounts for air clarity, weather, smoke, dirty windshields, the pilot's drink consumption and all the rest. The player who wants to master the simulation will want to work with those variables in order to maximize his performance. So, he needs two things: first, a display of all the relevant information and second, an understanding of the effect of the variable on the results of the activity. In general, if the player does not have the information displayed, he won't take it into account in his game play. Then, when the results don't meet expectations, he will get frustrated and accuse the game of being capricious, inaccurate and random.

Case study: an early versions of *Action Stations!* included a "fatigue factor," affecting gunfire rate of fire and gunfire accuracy. This was explained in the manual, but there was no display of the current fatigue levels. We started getting letters from folks complaining about how their ROF and accuracy was dropping. In a later version, we included a simple display — "A" through "F," representing "Rested" through "Pooped" — and converted jeers to cheers. Seeing the factor displayed triggered players to think about fatigue and include it in their tactical considerations.

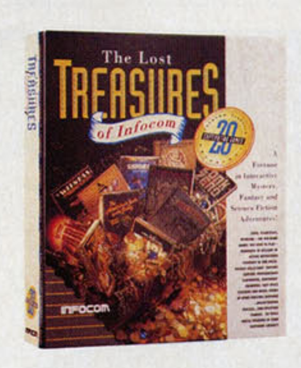
Right now, I'm envisioning a multi-level game. On the fleet commander level, one places oneself in a single ship. One is limited to controlling the course, speed, guns and aircraft, but is visually limited to what could be seen from one's flagship. Forces would be controlled by message traffic (radio, light and flags).

The other level would be the "God" mode (as in current *AS!*) wherein one can get all and control all. Carrier warfare in the FC mode would then be a combination of hide-and-seek, management of intelligence and management of resources. To make the game authentic, one must include all of those elements that impact on those decisions! For example, to track down the enemy, one will need one's own search assets. However, land-based search aircraft must also be factored in. The utility of non-organic information is based on the accuracy of the report, the accuracy of the navigation and the delay time required to get the report to the users.



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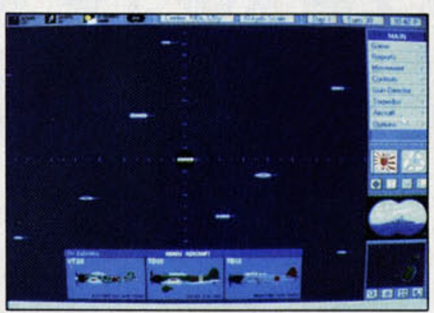
Circle Reader Service #42

Signals intelligence (on both sides of the Pacific War) was also highly developed. At Midway, the Japanese carrier force was in strict radio silence to the extent that it was hampering operations. When they were in the fog, they had to break radio silence in order to communicate with their replenishment group — their destroyers were desperate for fuel, and the navigation of the replenishment group was off. This implies several things that need to be included: group navigation inaccuracy;, communications between forces and fuel and replenishment requirements.

It also implies that if the communications requirements between forces are not properly modeled, the imperatives for the player to communicate are removed and thereby, this source of intelligence is restricted. This was a significant source of localizing information — for example, in the Marianas battle, the U. S. obtained several HF/DF fixes that were within 40nm of the actual position of the Japanese carrier forces.

January 1992

You'd never believe what can put a complete stop on a project. Gas tanks. Of all the standard references on WWII aircraft, none of them include the size of the fuel tanks! That is kind of critical. The problem stems from the fact that the "range" figures are not precise. They



may differ in whether they include warm-up time, climb to altitude, loaded or unloaded, landing pattern time, combat time over target and lots of other variables. Some indicate range at cruise speed (about 75% throttle) and some at "max endurance" speed (that'll make about a 20% difference alone). The problem is that references give the SBD (a USN dive bomber) a range of about 1000 nmiles, and yet the standard maximum "strike range" was considered to be only about 225 nmiles! What I'd like to do is calculate fuel flow for some sets of conditions: loiter, cruise and military power, each for loaded and unloaded conditions.

February 1992

I've run some calculations on fuel flows based on a few aircraft for which I have full data. It seems that fuel flow in combat was about 4 to 6 times the loiter fuel flow. So, 12 minutes in combat over the target for an F4F would burn up an hour's worth of fuel and reduce range by about 150 nmiles. These calculations are still going to be difficult — the data is too spotty. What I'll have to do is run some engine horsepower and weight-versus-fuel consumption curves for the various aircraft that I do have, and try to apply those figures to the others.

Late February 1992: Washington, D.C.

Eureka! The archives have just the data I need! I still need to do some conversion calculations, but at least I have some decent range and fuel tank data. I even found a document that gives fuel flows for U. S. Navy aircraft at various speeds and loads. We're in business! CGW



Opponents Wanted

Those wishing to place their own (free) ads need only send us a postcard (or use the *Notes* section of the RID card), letter, FAX or E-Mail, etc. Generally, we run them only once, so send another to keep your name listed! The ads themselves should serve as reasonable examples as to how to write your own. However,

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Bulletin Board Systems

Maxis, publisher of classic games like *SimCity, SimEarth* and *SimAnt* is initiating a new forum where aficionados of Maxis games can chat with Maxis technical support reps, game designers and each other: The Maxis BBS. Dial: (510) 253-3869 (set at 2400/N/8/1) on your computer modem for your line into Maxis culture. This BBS offers online product registration, free demos and upgrades, shareware utilities that enhance Maxis games, etc.

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Wargamers Addicted to Strategic Play ("WASP") invites you to call the Wizard's Tower BBS, home of the Modem Warriors. Tournaments and opponents for ***Command HQ, Modem Wars, 688 Attack Sub, Knights of the Sky*** and more. Find an opponent at (901) 757-2711 (2400,8,N,1), which is the Memphis, TN area. Mention this ad in *CGW* and get access to the WASP message base!

The Imperium BBS is looking for modem gamers like you! Tournaments are run for Knights of the Sky, Command HQ, The Perfect General and Global Conquest (just to name a few!). We have online games, message bas and 3 gigs of files, too. Call one of our three nodes in Middleton, NJ at either: 1200/2400 (908) 706-0342; 9600 v.32 (908) 706-0305; HST Dual Standard 38.4 (908) 706-0321.

The Forum BBS offers many online games as well as tournaments. We have 8 gigs online so call us in Staten Island, NY at: (718) 966-8637.

By Area Code

Targets for missle lock wanted for *Falcon 3.0*. Local opponents for modem play preferred. Contact Hank in W. Milford, NJ at: H (201) 728-8245 and leave a message. *(Watch the camopy as you punch out, Jack).* G

Local opponents wanted in the Trumbull, CT area for *Battlechess 1 and 2* for modem play. I can be reached on Compuserve at [70571,2616] or call Fred Tan at: H (203) 268-9965 between 8pm and 10pm, Eastern Time.

Opponents wanted for *Empire* and other Amiga wargames. Contact Kurt S. in the Detroit area: H (313) 563-8593; 24500 Ann Arbor Trail, Dearborn Hgts., MI 48127. NO MODEM.

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Local modem opponents wanted for *CHQ, F-29* and *Global Conquest*. Contact Greg in Omaha, NB at: (402) 597-2837.

Reliable opponents needed for *Second Front*, IBM version. Play-by-mail or modem. Call Kirk in Oklahoma City, OK at: H (405) 390-9384.

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Seeking opponents for *The Perfect General* in the Garden Grove, CA area. Call Mark Duckworth at: H (714) 748-1708.

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Worthy opponents wanted for *The Perfect General, Command HQ, Knights of the Sky, Global Conquest*, etc. If you live in the NYC area, call Peter at: H (718) 837-1302.

Veteran modem gamer seeks opponents in *Command HQ, Global Conquest, Perfect General, Falcon 3.0* and *Modem Wars*. I am from Bayside, NY and am available on Compuserve at [70172,1425]; America Online [Marcdio] or after 9pm Eastern time at: H (718) 465-3292.

Seeking *Command HQ* opponents in the Thunder Bay, Ontario area. I will consider playing long distance if a cost-share arrangement can be worked out. Call Greg Bishop at: H (807) 622-8500; W (807) 626-9555.

Looking for opponents to play *The Perfect General* in the local area code. Contact Mike Sr. at: H (813) 397-5470 or (813) 393-3658. Also on Prodigy at [BMGP65A].

Modem opponents wanted in the Tampa Bay area. Will do simulations or wargames. If I don't have it, I'll get it. Will also play SSI Civil War games by mail. Call Chris in Dunedin, FL at: H (813) 736-4142. If I'm not in, leave a message.

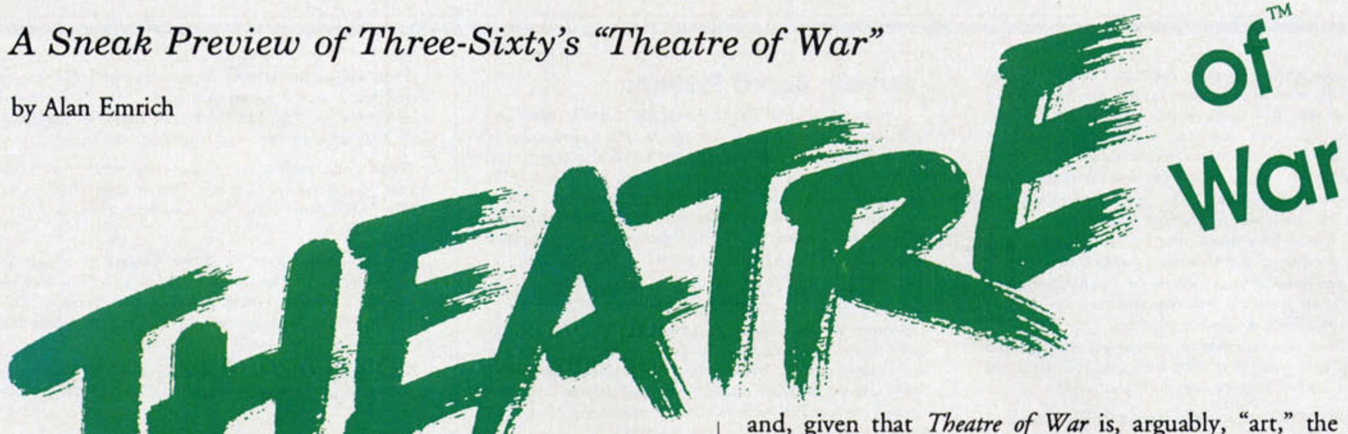
Medem opponents wanted for *The Perfect General* and *Command HQ*. Also, face-to-face *Second Front* and others. Contact Steve in Perth, Western Australia at: H 62 (9) 332-6744. I can also be reached on GEnie [S.Piotrowski]. CGW



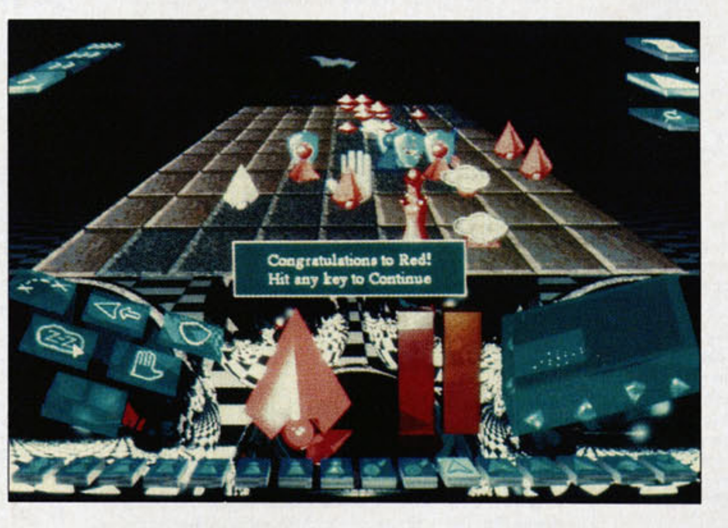
It, It, It Doesn't Go Any Further!

A Sneak Preview of Three-Sixty's "Theatre of War"

by Alan Emrich



Leave it to **Three-Sixty Pacific** to put the "theater" in *Theatre of War,* their soon-to-be-released strategy game that really must be seen to be believed. *Theatre* parts the curtain on SVGA graphics (640x280, with a full 256 color palette) using a VESA driver, with the stage set in three dimensions even as the pawns assemble, each resembling Macbeth's "poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more." The sound card, like any good orchestra, will crescendo and decrescendo (although I'd like to kill the kettle drummer) during the play, even as the audience is riveted to the bass soloist speaking his lines with the clarity and authority of James Earl Jones doing a Max Headroom impression. The dawn of each game begins with an off-Broadway opening night tension (one can almost hear a directorial shout of "*Action!*").



There but to Impress

Any first look at *Theatre of War* will be insufficient, requiring at *least* a double-take. With the only frame of reference to a strategy game players will find being a "board" with squares and "pieces" standing, chess-like, in their gates, one is left to wonder what demented decorators were sentenced to years of hard labor with their graphics tool kits and left alone to create the "look" of *Theatre of War.* In what can only be described as art deco poured into an ultra-contemporary mold, the sliding, spinning pieces do move gracefully across the stage. Telling the players without a scorecard, however, takes some time, for they are so stylized that recognition is a learned process and *not* an intuitive experience. In this regard, the SVGA graphic alchemy, poured by the magical and crafty hands of Grant Campbell, Rick Banks and Bob Monagham, seems designed to supersede the game in the box, rather than to support it. While this savory eye-candy is tasty (and won't rot your teeth) and, given that *Theatre of War* is, arguably, "art," the question remains "is it a good strategy game?"

"Oh, Is That What That Is!"

"Art for art's sake" is a nice rallying cry for artists, but "games for gaming's sake" might be the plea from designers Rick Banks and Paul Butler. After adapting to the almost visceral visuals, it is time to crack this game, piece-by-piece, like so many walnuts in a tensely hushed room. I greeted each discovery of: a) what a piece actually *is;* b) what that piece actually *does* and, even more importantly, c) how to get it to perform a desired action, with a silence-breaking inner cheer of joyous discovery. It is a fascinating process, to say the least, and not one without its rewards. Learning all of the pieces and their nuances in each of the three sets provided *is* a chore, but the siren-like glitz offers so much promise that one is compelled deeper into the game. If the value of a good thing is to have done it, I'm glad that I rode out the learning curve which I perceived as being too long for a "simple" strategy game. In the end, it was worth it.

From Pawns to Pugilists

Each of the three sets of pieces is the focal point for several unique scenarios. The first set features medieval pieces and includes: pawns, swordsmen, archers, a chariot, catapult and your emperor. Here, hand-to-hand combat is stressed as there are only the two missile unit types available. Instead, most battles are resolved as units enter the same space as an opponent, at which time the pieces animate and slowly grind each other down. Like the pieces themselves, watching the animations took some getting used to, but following the two information bars for each piece, strength and endurance, brought me back into the realm of strategy gaming quickly enough. Battles are fascinating, moment-by-moment attritional experiences, save for the occasional decisive missile shot which (as one might expect) can completely destroy some units. Units do not die quietly, ~~however,~~ as the titanic "oooph!" sound akin to James Earl Jones being slugged in the stomach so amply punctuates. When this happens to your emperor, the war is lost.

The two other sets of pieces include the Great War (World War 1) set and a contemporary set. Naturally, the World War 1 set includes early tanks, machine ["gattling" (sic)] guns, soldiers and one heavy artillery piece. A player's general and supply tents round out the logistical end of the piece mix. The contemporary set centers on a player's "base" piece, supported by two critical radar units, linking together the fire of missile launchers and scramble fighters. There are also tanks and a "knock out" bomber unit. Each set presents an entirely different style of warfare, requiring different strategies and tactics in order to succeed. Actually, it might be better described as saying that each set is an entirely different game, each sharing some common features, but quite individual in their own right.

Playing the Strategy Side Up

There's a limited amount of "wargaminess" to *Theatre of War*, but not much. The squares come in three terrain types (which can become degraded either deliberately or through combat and can also be improved by one's pieces). Both movement and logistics slow down over harsh terrain. Logistics? Well, yes, sort of. While much of the game centers around protecting one's own emperor/general/base while knocking out the opponent's, as units wear themselves out, they can "rest" and recuperate their strength (or resupply their missiles). To this end, an effective line of smooth squares back to the player's "king" piece will ease matters considerably. Some pieces can sleep out in the field, but most come home to roost (er, *rest*). Fairly simple stuff for wargamers, but it will add new elements to those who are attracted to *Theatre of War* primarily because it looks like a wild *Chess* variant.

Solitaire Puzzles

Each scenario, when played against the computer opponent, is more of a puzzle than a game. More akin to different "levels" in *Lemmings*, they get progressively harder and one will do well to learn them in order. Once mastered, the challenge they offer for repeat play is negligible, since they become, in effect, "cracked." Fortunately, each set of pieces had ten to fifteen scenarios in the beta copy examined, ranging from enemies who stand perfectly still (to give players a chance to adapt to the interface, thank goodness) to those who are particularly clever or vicious. So what should players do after running the gauntlet of all these scenarios?

Human Connections

Play another human, of course! Two players can play on the same computer taking "turns" of from one to sixty seconds. When the time is up, the player must cease issuing orders and pass the machine to the other player. Fortunately, *Theatre of War* is another in the growing list of modem playable games. A strategy game with a *Chess*-like nature such as *Theatre of War* will probably be a natural for the growing legions of modem strategy gamers. While the modem interface was a bit rough (but working) on the beta copy previewed, assurances from the design team indicate that it will be smoother when the finished product is shipped.

Game Design Philosophy 101

One design philosophy clearly permeates *Theatre of War*, and that is "graphics über interface." The *Populous*-like "orders" icons (mercifully tied into "generic" hot keys for each piece set) and the spiffy, rolling 3-D map views are perfect examples. While this "entertainment mode" is something to look at, it will not be an intense gamer's first choice for serious play. Fortunately, for the more "serious" gamer, a 2-D overhead version of the map can be selected for display. It can be zoomed down as far as one single square, or out to the size of the entire playing surface. *Un*fortunately, while in this 2-D "player's mode," important information access is lost pertaining to unit strengths and fatigue, which *are* included in the limited perspective "entertainment mode." Therefore, the serious player has a dilemma; either observe the entire map or know what his unit's strengths are. Not a satisfactory state of affairs, that.

Since this article is a preview of an unreleased game, much may yet be changed prior to its arrival on the store shelves. It is the purpose of a preview to give the reader insight into the "look and feel" of a forthcoming product and some of the underlying design philosophies behind its foundations. *Theatre of War* is a difficult game to describe, because so much of the package is "look and feel" that readers will still almost be *required* to go to their local software store to experience it first hand. It is the kind of product that was made for a traveling salesperson's "dog and pony" show type promotion. I suspect that the same people who bought *Wing Commander* to show off their computer's "muscle" will be in line for *Theatre of War* once they see it (and they will probably be pleasantly surprised that there is a decent game in the package, too). Hard core strategists are more likely to find themselves in a quandary; for behind all the glitzy "theater" in *Theatre of War*, behind the interface, there seems to be the makings of an interesting strategy game that was *made* for head-to-head play. CGW

What Is Senseless Violence?

by Johnny L. Wilson

Although we are sometimes accused of such, we have no desire for *CGW* to become the official arbiter of computer game mores. We must be doing something right because we get assailed on one hand for "worrying" over the inconsequential violence in an arcade-style game while, during the same period, we are set up as "straw man" representing "immorality" in computer games on a nationally syndicated radio program. Our editor's advocacy of a system where software publishers would standardize upon a ***voluntary*** rating system (before state legislatures decided to "rate" games ***involuntarily***) brings protests that we are advocating a system where artistic freedom will be threatened, rather than suggesting a solution where artistic freedom could be protected. Yet, at the same time, we have been criticized for publishing screen shots of scantily clad women and unsavory situations when we were covering games filled with scantily clad women and unsavory situations. Our critics do not seem to understand that a primary reason for covering games in the first place is so that readers can decide whether a game is for them or not. Obviously, we did our job too well.

With all of this under consideration, this editorial is not being written to nominate *CGW* as the industry's ethical umpire. Nevertheless, any thinking person (not defined simply as those who agree with this editor or a concensus of our readership) ought to have the opportunity to ask questions, prod thinking and challenge the "accepted" ways in which computer games (or anything else) are created. Such discussion may actually lead to more creative ways of dealing with authentic human issues. At the very least, they may affirm the "accepted" ways of crafting these products.

This particular discussion was prompted by a frivolous use of violence in an upcoming computer game. We shall not identify the game by name, because it could change substantially or be shaped more sensitively before it actually reaches the market. It featured a huge mechanoid trying to destroy wave after wave of miniature homo-sapien soldiers. The mechanoid stomped on these little soldiers and shot them with its weaponry, setting their tanks and helicopters on fire and even riddling paratroopers into pulpy masses by the time they reached the ground. These little bitty soldiers exploded into volcanic eruptions of blood splatters and made the cutest little sounds of helplessness.

I must confess that my first reaction was, "What life-like animation! What beautifully rendered graphics!" My next reaction was shock. My stomach twisted through a gymnastics routine such as I hadn't experienced since the first *Alien* erupted from John Hurt's abdomen. It suddenly registered that the dominant visual image presented in the game was of a huge inhuman force destroying insignificant human lives at an incredibly rapid pace. Then, I realized that this game, only slightly protracted beyond the normal arcade game, was an absolutely sure hit for all the wrong reasons. Gamers will rave about the "cute" little animations (where itty-bitty humans are dying) and the life-like movements of the mechanoid. They will love the detailed graphics and the feeling of absolute power when maneuvering the mechanoid. Yet, the game visually presents a violent scenario where, in an unrealistic manner and in total contradiction to the realistic-looking blood, death is symbolically trivialized.

Admittedly, the game may say something entirely different when the designer gives the player a motive and builds a fiction around which these human wave battles will occur, but at first glance, the game allows the player to use unlimited ammunition and ruthless tactics to destroy as many humans as possible. One has to wonder what this says about the value of human life. I mean, we're no longer talking about slaughtering the aliens of some sci-fi scenario in gleeful xenocide (pun intended), we're talking about the entertaining slaughter of human representations.

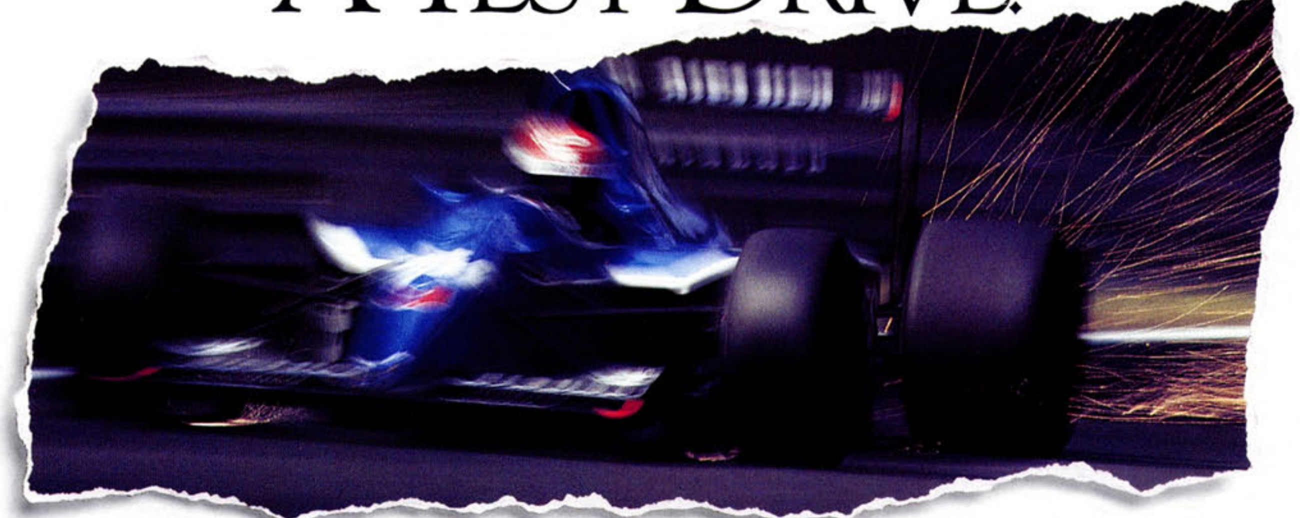
One of *CGW's* editors was playing an updated three-dimensional version of an old action game classic. In the new version, one kills human enemies in a life-like first-person perspective. He showed this game to a non-gamer who was horrified. Suddenly, our staffer realized that he had not been offended because he still thought of the exercise as a "game" and of the enemies as the stick-figures they had been in the classic version of the game. "What are we saying," asked my colleague, "when we depict life-like carnage in a game where the design is geared for you to kill nearly everyone you encounter?"

I think that the current state of game design dangerously understates the inadequacy of violent solutions to human problems. When we design games that *force* the player character to shoot his/her way out with no chance to reflect on who is being shot or why, we are reinforcing the concept that life is cheap, advocating to a lesser or greater degree the use of senseless violence. I do not believe we need to remove violence altogether, but that we do need some "action" equivalents to the little boy in *Wasteland.* Most of us shot the rabid dog (we only know of one person who managed to get out of the situation without shooting the dog) and faced a little boy chasing us, crying and shouting to any who would listen that we had shot his dog.

I know "shoot-outs" are a heroic metaphor of the individual against all odds. Even my nine year old son knows that they are an arcade convention where the enemies are meant to be abstractions. As he wrote in his journal, "I get to play games where you get to kill a lot. My mom calls them shoot-'em-ups. I call them fun." Nevertheless, when *real* weapons are used, they are not used on abstractions. I would like to see games where player characters may alienate entire villages or groups if they happen to kill, maim or alienate a non-player character that was neutral or coming to help the player's group. I want there to be consequences. I want player characters to meet some widows or widowers and surviving children of those wrongfully killed. I want player characters to pick up the pieces after a firefight or try to get "Hero Insurance" to pay for incidental damage when they destroy buildings and artifacts during a melee. Maybe the hero/heroine should be indicted occasionally and face a trial, leading to an ending that is not desired. Perhaps, the protagonist should have more non-violent options, a *Hopalong Cassidy* option where cartridges in the fire distract the gang of bad guys long enough to escape without shooting or *The Shadow* option where one turns the bad guy's conscience upon himself. One thing I do believe is that violence without consequences is a bald-faced lie. At times, it is more deplorable than others, but the entertainment software industry (like the film, television and comics industries) needs to rethink the message we're sending.

(To be continued)

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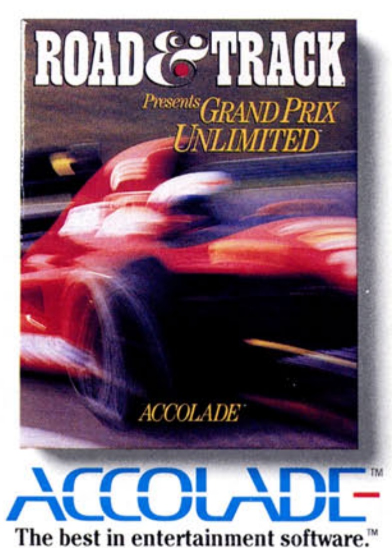


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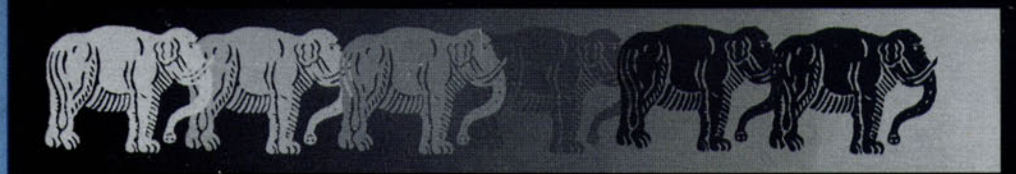
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